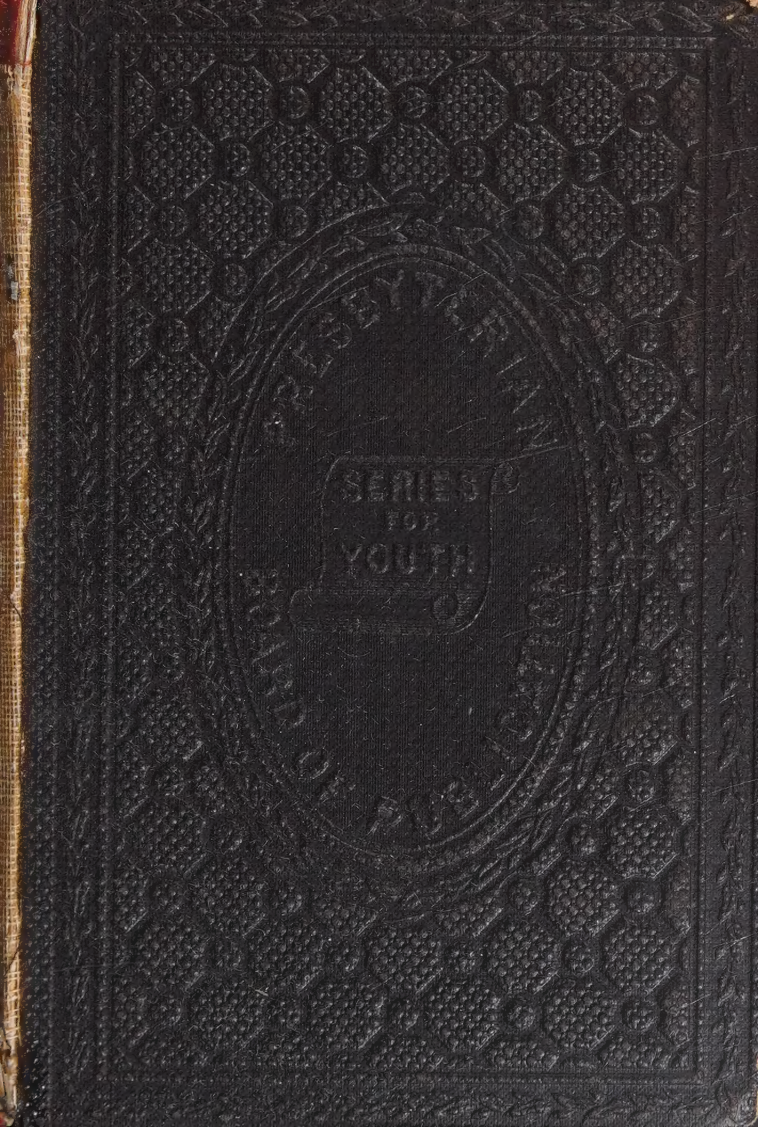
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FRANK AND HIS FATHER.

FRANK NETHERTON,

OR

THE TALISMAN.

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FRANK NETHERTON.

CHAPTER I.

FRANK NETHERTON.

The mother of Frank Netherton died at his birth, and from that time his father would scarcely suffer him to be out of his sight. No one thought that the infant would have lived; but God, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, took care of the little motherless boy, and raised him up to be a comfort to his surviving parent. Frank was never so happy as when seated on his little stool at his father's feet, learning "something new," as he termed it, or listening to the wonderful histories of foreign lands which he used to tell him.

When Frank was six years old, he knew

more than most boys of ten or twelve, and was so quick and diligent that it was a pleasure to teach him. Many people observed, and with truth, that he understood almost too much for his age; and that he often sat poring over his book when he ought to have been playing about in the green fields. That might have been partly the reason why he was not strong and healthy like other children, but used often to come and rest his weary head against his father's knee, and ask him to repeat the story of the child who went out to his father among the reapers, and said to him all on a sudden, "My head! my head!" and was borne home to his mother and died, and was raised again by the power of God. Frank liked all the Old Testament histories, but this was his favourite at such times, and he never grew tired of hearing it.

Mr. Netherton was a man of studious and retired habits. After the death of his wife, whom he tenderly loved, he cared less than ever for society, and wholly devoted himself to his books and the education of his little son.

But his health rapidly declined ; so rapidly of late that the old housekeeper, who had lived in the family for many years, and was much attached to her master, thought it her duty to write to his sister, the only relative he had in the world, and confide to her her fears.

Mrs. Mortimer set off immediately on receiving the letter, and arrived at the Grange quite unexpectedly, and much to the surprise of every one but the faithful domestic before mentioned. The brother and sister had not met since the death of his wife. She had been opposed to their marriage ; but all unkind feeling on both sides was buried in the grave, and Mrs. Mortimer embraced her little nephew with almost maternal affection.

"He is very like you, William," said she, looking at her brother with the tears in her eyes. "But how short for his age ! Why, my Frederick, who is only a year older, is above a head and shoulders taller. And how pale he is ! I am afraid that he does not take exercise enough. William, you are killing this boy by inches."

"My dear sister!" exclaimed Mr. Netherton. "But he is not ill. You are not ill, Frank, are you?" and he trembled as he took the boy's little thin hand in his.

"No, papa; my head does not ache to-day."

"Go away, child," said Mrs. Mortimer. "Go into the garden and amuse yourself."

Frank immediately obeyed her; but he took his book with him, and sat down under the trees to read it.

"You are killing the boy, I tell you," repeated Mrs. Mortimer, when he was gone, "and yourself too. The air of this close room is absolutely poisonous. No wonder the poor child looks so pale and miserable. You must get him a pony the first thing."

"He shall have one to-morrow," said Mr. Netherton.

"And you must ride and walk with him every day."

"I do not think that I could walk very far," said her brother, with a sigh, thus unconciously admitting his own weakness.

"Not just at first perhaps; and yet how you and I used to walk, William. Do you remember?"

"Yes; we were children at that time."

"About the age of our children now. Do you imagine that Frank could walk as you did then?"

"I am afraid not."

"Well, well, I will not say as I have heard some people, that what is done cannot be undone, but will try and help you to undo it as fast as possible. Look at the boy now; instead of playing about like other children, there he is lying under the trees reading. William, you will be very sorry for all this if you should lose your child."

"I am sorry now," replied the sick man, meekly. "You are right, dear sister. I am afraid that I have been very thoughtless and selfish. God forgive me. You will stay here a little while, will you not, and help me to amend the past?"

Mrs. Mortimer was touched by his gentleness and forbearance, and with much kindness

of manner promised not to leave the Grange until they were both better.

Mrs. Mortimer was several years her brother's senior, and had always exercised upon him that influence which a strong mind invariably possesses over a weak one, until his marriage, which, as before stated, she had opposed. It matters little now what her reasons were for this opposition: she thought herself right at the time, but was very sorry for it afterwards, and when, alas! it was too late. She wrote and told her brother this: but, with his loss still fresh upon his mind, his reply to her letter was such as prevented all intercourse between them for some years.

Beneath a somewhat rough exterior, Mrs. Mortimer possessed a kind heart, and much practical good sense, which only required at times to be exercised in a gentler spirit. At the period of which we are speaking she was a widow, with one son, Frederick, and a little girl whom she had called Helen, after her sister-in-law. Mr. Netherton was pleased when she told him of this mark of attention,

and begged earnestly that the child might be sent for, and that Frederick might also be permitted to spend his holidays at the Grange; to all of which Mrs. Mortimer willingly agreed.

"I am so glad that you are come," said he. "It was very kind of you after that cruel letter. I have often thought of sending to ask you, but I put it off from time to time, and should have done so, I believe, until it was too late. I used to think, when I am dying she will not refuse to forgive and come to me again."

"We were both to blame," answered Mrs. Mortimer, with tears in her eyes: "I the most so; but my little Helen must plead for me. Now do not let us say anything more about it," added she, observing that her brother looked pale and exhausted; "and I will write at once and make arrangements for her coming."

But before Mrs. Mortimer began to write, she went into the garden and took Frank's book away, bidding him run about, and not lie there on the damp grass.

"Have you a hoop?" asked she.

"Yes, aunt, I believe so."

"Well, we must look for it; and when your cousin Frederick comes, he will teach you all sorts of games. Shall you not like to have some one to play with?"

"Yes, very much," answered Frank; "but I like being with my father."

"Are any of these flower-beds yours?" inquired his aunt.

"No, the gardener takes care of them."

"We must ask your father to give you one to dig and plant—shall we? And a little rake, and a hoe, and a watering-pot?"

Frank's eyes glistened with pleasure.

"That would be delightful!" exclaimed he. And then slipping his hand into Mrs. Mortimer's, he added, in a confidential tone, "It is very strange, but I was just reading about flowers when you came into the garden; and how some bloom till December, while others perish in May. I think that if I were a flower, dear aunt, I would rather die in May, when everything looks so bright."

"But as you are not a flower, Frank, but a little boy, I do not see any use in thinking about it."

"One cannot help thinking," said Frank.

"What a little, old-fashioned thing it is," murmured his aunt. "But then Frederick might have been the same if he had had no mother:" and passing her hand carelessly over his long hair, which she inwardly determined should be cut off the first opportunity, and cautioning him not to remain after the dew began to fall, she went into the house to write her letters.

CHAPTER II.

BRIGHTER DAYS.

When Frank returned to the study, he found his father still sitting where he had left him, with his face bent down and buried in his hands.

"Are you ill?" asked he, gently. Mr. Netherton started, and drawing the boy towards him, embraced him in silence.

"Papa," exclaimed Frank, after a pause, "you are thinking of what my aunt said just now about me; but indeed I do not want to live after you are gone."

Mr. Netherton aroused himself at the voice of his child, and, struggling against his own weakness, both of mind and body, answered cheerfully.

"You must not say that, Frank. I hope,

if it is God's will, that you may live to be a great and good man, and do good to others."

"Like Howard, for instance, who went about visiting all the prisons: what a deal of good he did!"

"Yes; you must study hard while you are a boy—that is, not too hard; and when you are a man there is no fear but what God will give you something to do for himself and others."

"I should like to be a missionary, such as Henry Martyn, whose life you were reading the other morning."

"There is time enough to think what you will be ten years hence. And now I will tell you something that I think will give you pleasure. You remember the pretty bay pony which you admired so much the other day?"

"Oh yes, to be sure I do."

"Well, it is yours; and to-morrow you shall begin to learn to ride."

Frank clapped his hands for joy.

"But will you not ride too, papa?"

"Yes, as soon as ever you are able to accompany me."

"How delightful that will be! How kind of you to think of it!"

"It was your aunt who first thought of it, Frank; so you must thank her. I need not tell you to be very obedient to her, and to do all that she bids you, for I am sure that it will be for your good."

Frank promised that he would. And then he related to his father what she had said about the garden, and obtained his willing consent to a small portion of it being allotted to Frank's peculiar use.

"I will see the gardener about it the first thing to-morrow morning," said Mr. Netherton, "and order him to procure tools suited to your size and strength, and whatever seeds or cuttings you may require."

"I must ask my aunt about that," said Frank.

At that moment Mrs. Mortimer entered, and smilingly inquired what he was going to ask her with that radiant countenance.

"I declare the boy has quite a colour," said she, pinching his flushed cheek. "But come to tea now, and then to bed. I never allow my children to sit up late. You know the old proverb, William," added she, turning to her brother,

"'Early to bed, and early to rise,
Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.'"

"I knew a great many things once that I have forgotten," replied Mr. Netherton, as he offered her his arm. "You must remind me of them, my dearest sister."

"To be sure I will. Come along, Frank." And her cheerful voice sounded pleasantly in the long silent halls of the old Grange, where no female, except the domestics, had ever come since the death of its gentle mistress.

"But about the seeds, aunt," said Frank, as soon as they were seated at the table. "What sort had I better have?"

"Come to me to-morrow morning, and we will talk it over. You will find me in the garden by six o'clock."

"Six o'clock!" repeated Frank.

"Well, is that too early? Do you not think that you are as capable of getting up early as I am?"

"Why, I suppose you are used to it, aunt."

Mrs. Mortimer could not help smiling.

"And you must get used to it too, Frank. Do you understand anything of arithmetic?"

"Yes, aunt."

"Well, then, to-morrow you shall calculate for yourself how many years are wasted in an average life-time by lying in bed in the morning."

"And the shorter the life is," said Frank, thoughtfully, "the less we can spare them. I will begin to-morrow morning, I am determined."

"Do so, my dear boy, and you will soon reap the benefit of it every way. And in order that you may be the better able to keep your good resolutions, I would advise your going to bed at once."

Frank was very obedient; and hastily

swallowing his tea, he arose from his chair, and went away without another word, having first kissed his father, and held up his face to his aunt with an affectionate confidence that completely won her heart.

"God bless you, my child," said Mrs. Mortimer; and then turning to his father, she added, "I need not ask whether you have taught him to pray. Whatever you may have neglected, William I am sure that you have not forgotten that."

After Frank was gone, Mr. Netherton and his sister had a long and earnest conversation together, in which he had admitted the justice and good sense of all her plans, and promised his assistance in carrying them into practice. And then they both kneeled down and asked God's blessing upon the future, without which they could never hope to succeed, leaving the result to Him who orders all things for the best, and who, as Mr. Netherton said, had sent her to save his child.

From that time Mr. Netherton ceased to

talk to Frank of the past, but spoke cheerfully and hopefully of the present and of the future. And when he did allude, as he could not help occasionally doing, to her who was never long absent from his thoughts, he spoke of the joy that it would give her—if angels are permitted to behold what passes upon earth—to see her beloved child good and happy.

Since Mrs. Mortimer's arrival, a change seemed to have come over the whole establishment at the Grange. Some of the servants were sent away, and no one missed them: while the others were obliged to do their duty, and, above all, to attend public worship regularly on the Sabbath, besides being ready for family worship, which Mr. Netherton conducted with his household morning and evening. At such times, or when she listened to the merry voices of Frank and his cousin Helen, and saw her master smilingly regarding their childish sports, the faithful housekeeper blessed the hour when God had put it into her heart to write the

letter which had brought back Mrs. Mortimer to the home of her childhood, and made them all friends again.

Helen was a quiet, good-tempered little girl, and Frank soon became very fond of her, and used to give her all his prettiest flowers, and was never weary of playing with her, and relating stories, the greater part of which she did not half understand.

"How clever cousin Frank is!" said Helen one day to her mother.

"Yes, I dare say he appears so to you, Helen, who are only a little girl."

Frank coloured.

"I do not believe that Frederick knows half as many wonderful things," persisted Helen. "Tell mamma about the nasturtiums, cousin. Only think, dear mamma, on summer nights they actually send out—"

"Emit," interrupted Frank.

"Emit sparks of fire. Who was it that first saw them, Frank?"

"The daughter of Linnæus, the great botanist."

"I forget what you told me botany meant."

"The natural history of plants and vegetables," replied her mother; "in which Linnæus, by great perseverance and application was well skilled. It has been said of him, that he never took a thing in hand which he did not resolutely accomplish and bring to an end; and therein lies the secret of his success. Application and observation are two very desirable qualifications. It was doubtless by means of the latter that his daughter made the discovery about the nasturtiums. We may all make discoveries, if we will only learn to use our eyes."

"'Eyes and no eyes,' Helen, You remember that story in the 'Evenings at Home?'" said her cousin. "How I should like you and me to make some wonderful discovery!"

"But we are only children," answered Helen, meekly.

"I have heard my father say," continued Frank, "that it was two little children who first invented, or led to the invention, of the

telescope. They were playing one day in their father's shop at Middleburg—we will look for Middleburg on the map when we go in—and chanced to set up two pieces of glass, such as are used in making spectacles, at a little distance from each other, when, to their great surprise, they saw the church steeple, which was in reality a long way off, nearer than they had ever seen it before, and everything else in comparison. Did you ever look through a telescope, Helen?"

"Yes, once when we were by the seaside; and it seemed to bring the ships close to the shore, so that we could see what some of the men were doing on board."

"Well, I suppose the children could not see quite so plainly as that, but they were very much astonished, and ran to tell their father what they had discovered, who immediately procured some pieces of glass of the same size, which he fixed in tubes; and so the telescope was first invented."

"How strange! was it not, mamma?" said Helen.

"Not strange, my dear, but very interesting. It was observation led to the invention of the telescope, and application which finally brought it to its present perfection. I am glad, my dear Frank, to find how well you remember what you read and hear. After dinner I will have the great telescope fixed up on the balcony, and you shall both look through it as long as you please."

CHAPTER III.

THE COUSINS.

It was a happy day for Helen when her brother arrived to spend his holidays at the Grange; for she was very fond of him, notwithstanding that he used to tease her a great deal. Frederick, as his mother had observed, although only a year older than his cousin Frank, was at least a head and shoulders taller. He was a fine, active, high-spirited boy, somewhat wilful and overbearing, but good-natured and warm-hearted.

Nothing could be more unlike in appearance and disposition than the two cousins. Frederick was cheerful and talkative, and often said a great many things which had better have been left unsaid; and for which, although he was too proud to acknowledge it,

he was sorry afterwards. Frank was also cheerful, but quieter: when he did speak, it was generally to the purpose. Frederick was so restless that it was with difficulty he could sit still, or fix his attention upon any subject for above a few moments at a time. Frank sat and studied too much, and seldom cared to take that exercise and relaxation which is so necessary, as well as natural, for the young. The one wanted application, the other activity.

Frederick was proud and sensitive: the fear of ridicule, or the laughter of his companions, would turn him away even from what he knew to be right. He was not physically, but morally, a coward. He was afraid to think for himself. Frank was singularly fearless both in mind and body. He always said what he thought, without caring what others thought of him. Mr. Netherton had been very anxious to encourage this feeling; but he also never failed to remind him, that although the truth must be spoken at all times, it should be spoken in love; that we may be perfectly

sincere, without being harsh or unkind. To be sure, Frank had yet to learn whether he could bear being ridiculed for his opinions.

It is strange how the fear of God casts out the fear of man. If we can feel *quite sure* that God approves of our thoughts and actions, how trifling, in comparison, appears the approval of others!

The cousins had been talking together a few weeks after Frederick's arrival.

"I dare say," observed he, "that I am just as good as you, only I do not make such a fuss about it. If I did, I should be finely laughed at at school, I can tell you."

"I do not pretend to be good," answered Frank; "but I do not see why I should be ashamed of trying to be better, or of talking about that which can alone make me so."

"It is all very well here, with my uncle and little Helen; but we have no saints at school."

"I have heard my father say," replied Frank, "that the word saint is often used in

the same sense as believer. Are there no believers at your school?"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Frederick, impatiently. "Do you take us for heathens?"

"Then if Christians, why be ashamed of Christ?"

"It is all very well at present," said Frederick, "but I should like to see what you would do at school: and it is not improbable that I may, from what I overheard mamma say yesterday to my uncle."

"Oh, what could that be? But do not tell me; if my father wishes me to know, he will tell me himself."

"Should you like to go back with me, Frank?"

"I do not know; I never thought about it. I think I should; only I should be sorry to leave my dear father. Wordsworth, I remember, calls his school-days 'the golden time.'"

"Ah! that was when he was a man. But I can tell you that it is a great bore having to study so many hours, and being obliged to learn, whether you like it or not. To be sure,

the play-time is pleasant enough; and the half-holidays, when it does not rain. But I do not know what you would do in play-time: why, you do not know a single game."

"I suppose I could learn."

"I do not know," replied Frederick, gazing rather contemptuously at his cousin's slight, delicate form. "We call such fellows as you girls, at school."

"Never mind, Frank," said little Helen, kindly. "I do not mind being called a girl."

Neither of the cousins could help laughing.

"That is because you are a girl. But you would mind being called a Tom-boy," said her brother.

"She need not," interrupted Frank, "because it would not be the truth. It does not signify what any one says of us if we know that it is untrue."

"Very well, Mr. Philosopher," said Frederick, shaking his head; "we shall see."

Frederick was right in supposing that, in all probability, his cousin would accompany

him back to school. When Mrs. Mortimer first spoke of it to her brother, he instantly and decidedly refused to part with his child; but she gradually succeeded in convincing him how much it would be for Frank's advantage in every way, and a reluctant consent was at length obtained.

"Be it so," said Mr. Netherton. "Let him go and form fresh connections and associations that may console him, should it please God to take me away. As it is, I fear that such an event would break the poor child's heart."

"Let us hope better things," replied his sister, gently. "You are already considerably stronger; and Frank is quite a different boy to what he was a month ago."

"Thanks to you."

"Thanks to God, my dear brother. I trust, if it be his will, you may be spared many years to see your son become all that you could wish. Frank is a noble little fellow; but as yet he is only a dreamer. It will be good both for his mind and body to associate for a

FRANK AND HIS PONY. Page 31.

time with other boys, and learn to act as well as to think for himself; and to join not only in their studies, but their sports. It is not enough to be clever and learned; we must also be useful and active—men and boys more especially."

Mr. Netherton admitted that she was right, with a sigh for his own helplessness. Sorrow, and a lingering, although painless disease, had made him what he was: but it had not been so in past days, and he could still anticipate a brighter future for his child.

Frank could not help feeling sad at the thought of leaving home, and, above all, his kind and indulgent parent, from whom he had never before been separated, even for a single day; but Mrs. Mortimer had warned him, for that parent's sake, to try and control his emotion. The little fellow obeyed her as well as he was able: but it was a hard trial for his fortitude—almost his first trial. Even the bay pony and the flower-garden came in for a share of his regrets, although little Helen promised to take the latter under her own care;

Mrs. Mortimer having consented to continue to reside at the Grange, at least for the present.

Frederick did very little towards encouraging his young companion, for he warned him that he must not look to him for every thing, but fight his own battles, as he had been obliged to do when he first went to school. To which Frank replied, that he did not want any one to fight his battles, and that he had no doubt but that he should do very well; although, in his heart, he could not help thinking his cousin somewhat unkind.

It was not ill-nature, but the fear of being laughed at, which made Frederick determine to hold back until he had seen how Frank was likely to be received. He felt half ashamed that a cousin of his should be so profoundly ignorant of all that he thought it necessary for a schoolboy to know.

"What is the use of his Greek and Latin," argued Frederick, "when he understands nothing of cricket, and cannot even play at

foot-ball? And then he is such a little fellow—though, to be sure, he cannot help that —and has such old-fashioned notions. He is sure to be quizzed."

CHAPTER IV.

FRANK LEAVES HOME.

The evening before Frank left home, he went into the study to have what he called "a last look." There stood his father's easy chair, and his own little stool on which he had so often sat at his feet, and listened to his conversation, in which amusement, instruction, and something higher still, were ever carefully blended together; where he had so often heard his favourite story of the child and the reapers. And now he was going away for months, and he might never hear that dear father's voice again. Child as he was, Frank knew the sad meaning of the word death. His little heart was full to bursting; and kneeling down before the chair, he buried his head in its cushions, and wept.

Mr. Netherton entered unperceived, and thinking that he was praying, stood a moment unwilling to interrupt him, while his own heart ascended in earnest supplication to the throne of grace; until aroused by a passionate sob.

"My son, my dear son!" exclaimed Mr. Netherton, bending over him. The sight of his pale face recalled to Frank his aunt's warning, and he hastily arose.

"Forgive me," said he. "I could not help weeping just for a moment when I thought of all the happy hours we have spent here together. But I dare say that I shall be very happy at school after a time."

"I hope so, Frank. You must write to me. My chief pleasure, when you are away, will be to hear of your well-doing. It is a comfort that your cousin Frederick will be with you."

Frank was too truthful to say yes; so he said nothing. Mr. Netherton sat down in his easy chair, and Frank placed himself once again at his feet.

"Tell me a story, papa," said he, after a

pause: "one more story, as you used to do before my aunt came."

"There is no time for a story now, Frank; or we shall keep that kind aunt waiting tea for us. But I will tell you a little anecdote I read the other day, and which I believe to be a fact."

"Oh, thank you! I like facts," said Frank, leaning his head on his father's knee.

"A negro woman, in one of the West Indian Islands," began Mr. Netherton, "was once forbidden by her master to attend public worship, and threatened with severe punishment if she ventured to go. Although only a slave, the poor woman was a sincere and humble follower of Him who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. The only pleasure which she had was in going to the house of God to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ, and that better land where there shall be no more sorrow nor sighing, and which he had purchased for her with his precious blood. Her disappointment was great; but she only lifted up her hands and eyes to heaven, and

answered meekly, 'I must tell de Lord dat.' It is said that this touching reply, this quiet appeal to a higher tribunal, so affected her owner that he no longer refused the desired permission. God softened the heart of this cruel master, for the sake of his poor, oppressed servant."

"What a nice anecdote!" said Frank.

"And will you endeavour to remember it, my dear boy; and bring all your little trials and troubles to the Lord, to your heavenly Father—in full assurance of his love and tender compassion for Jesus' sake? Commit your way unto the Lord, and he will bring it to pass. Tell your difficulties and disappointments to him. Leave every thing in his hands. He knoweth best, and will do for us above all that we can desire or deserve. You believe this, Frank?"

"I am sure of it," replied the boy, raising his bright, trustful glance to his father's face.

"It is well. And now I have a present for you, my dear boy, which I think you will like," said Mr. Netherton, placing a small

clasped Bible in the hands of his son. "I need not tell you to value it."

"Oh, thank you, dear papa! I do like it very much indeed," replied Frank, with glistening eyes.

"You will read a chapter, as usual, morning and evening," said Mr. Netherton. "And you must not neglect to pray at the same time. I know that you will have a great deal to do and think of at school, and very little time to yourself; but, as the good Mr. Cecil observes, 'A Christian will find his parenthesis for prayer even through his busiest hours.'"

"I suppose he meant that he would make it," said Frank.

"It is not improbable that such was his meaning. But I have one more thing to say: I am not afraid of your being idle, Frank, so much as I am that you will study too hard. Remember that I would rather see a little colour in your cheeks, than the first prize in your hand." He could not trust himself to add more; but Frank knew by the faltering voice, and the trembling of the hand which

rested upon his shoulder, how tenderly he was beloved, and promised faithfully to recollect and obey his injunctions; after which they went into the drawing-room to tea.

Notwithstanding all Mrs. Mortimer's efforts to the contrary, in which she was warmly seconded by her son, the evening passed gloomily away. Little Helen wept at the thought of parting with her "two brothers," as she called them; and Frank, but for shame, would fain have sat down and mingled his tears with hers. Although he endeavoured to exert himself to appear cheerful, his heart was sad whenever he looked up and met his father's gaze fixed earnestly upon him.

It had been arranged that the boys were to start by an early coach on the following morning, accompanied by a trustworthy domestic; and Mr. Netherton had promised not to attempt to rise at so unusual an hour: the parting, therefore, was to take place at night. Frank bore it bravely for his father's sake.

"What if I should never see him again!" exclaimed Mr. Netherton, as the door closed.

"Let us hope better things," said his sister; "but endeavour, nevertheless, to say, 'God's will be done.'"

Mr. Netherton bent down his head, and his whispered "Amen" spoke of a meek and chastened spirit.

Mrs. Mortimer came into Frank's room after he was in bed. The pillow was wet with his tears, and he turned away his head that she might not see how he had wept.

"Never mind, Frank," said his aunt, tenderly embracing him. "It is natural that you should grieve at leaving home for the first time. You have shown a great deal of self-control before your poor father, and I am much pleased with you."

"Do you think my father so very ill?" asked Frank, earnestly.

"He requires great care; but there is nothing at present that need render you uneasy. I need not tell you that he will be taken great care of in your absence."

"And if he should be worse?—"

"I will send for you at once: not that you could do any good, but because it would be a comfort to you."

"My dear, dear aunt, how kind you are!" exclaimed Frank, clasping his arms round her neck. "How much I love you!"

"I am glad of that. I want you to love me, and to look upon me as a mother."

A remorseful pang went through Mrs. Mortimer's heart as she pronounced the last word; but Frank's affectionate caresses soothed her again.

"Now go to sleep," said she, after a pause, and laying him gently back on the pillow, "that you may be able to rise early to-morrow morning. I hope that you and Frederick will be good friends. I give you the same advice I have always given him: Let nothing induce you to deviate from the truth, or to tell tales of your companions. The liar and the tale-bearer are despised. Study in school, and play out of it. The more exercise you take, the better. Be neither a tyrant nor a

slave; but kind, and ever ready to oblige. Do your duty; and always endeavour to act rightly, without caring about the consequences. Have no fear but the fear of God. May he bless and watch over you, my dear child, for Jesus' sake!"

Again Mrs. Mortimer kissed his cheek, and Frank felt a tear there that was not his own; but before he could speak she was gone.

Frank did not see his father again before he started; but when he bent forward to catch a last glimpse of the old Grange, he noticed that the blind in Mr. Netherton's room was drawn slightly aside, and felt that he watched and blessed him.

"Do not cry, Frank," said his cousin, at length. "After all, you will not find a school life so bad, when once you are used to it. I rather like going back now. But to be sure I felt as you do at first."

"It is not that. I should not so much mind going to school," said Frank, "if I were quite sure of finding all right on my return home."

"You are thinking of your father. He will get better."

"Oh, I hope so!"

"I am sure of it," repeated Frederick, encouragingly. "My mother is a capital nurse."

Frank did not reply; but after a few moments he wiped away his tears, and spoke cheerfully. He had placed the matter in God's hands, and asked him to take care of his dear father for him until he came back again.

CHAPTER V.

SCHOOL TRIALS.

NEARLY all the boys had returned, and were assembled in the school-room when the cousins arrived. Mr. Campbell received them kindly, and having shaken hands and exchanged a few words with his new pupil, he introduced him to his school-fellows, and consigning him more especially to the care of his cousin, left them together.

Frederick had a thousand things to tell his companions; a thousand questions to ask and answer as to where they had been, and what they had done during the holidays; and Frank meanwhile stood by, unnoticed and alone, and feeling almost ready to cry. When they did begin to notice him at length, he was not much better off, for they only smiled, and

whispered to one another; and he observed that Frederick appeared to be as much amused as the rest. Frank began to look as well as feel very sad and dismal in that room full of strange faces, and a large tear stole down his flushed cheek.

"What is the matter?" asked one of the boys. "Are you mother-sick already?"

"That cannot be," answered Frank, "for I have no mother."

"Poor little fellow! leave him alone," said an authoritative voice. The boys drew back and continued to whisper; all but one, who went up to where Frank stood, and holding out his hand, said in a low voice—

"I have no mother either. Let us be friends."

"With all my heart," replied Frank.

"I did not hear what Mr. Campbell said your name was?"

"Frank Netherton."

"Mine is Howard."

"Have you been long at school?" asked Frank.

"Yes, nearly a twelvemonth; but I do not like it better than the first day I came."

"Mr. Campbell appears to be very kind."

"So he is, when we do right. But the worst of it is, I never can do right for long together; and then he is very stern, and I get so frightened that I do not know what I am about."

"Have you a father?" asked Frank.

"No, I am an orphan. My aunt is very kind to me; only of course she does not love me as well as her own children."

"I, too, have an aunt," said Frank; "and a father also."

"You are very young to come to school, are you not?"

"Only a year younger than my cousin Frederick."

"Then you are very little for your age."

"That was what you were all laughing at, I suppose," said Frank; "but I did not make myself."

"Why, Philip Doyle did call you an odd-looking, old-fashioned little thing; and then

Mortimer said that you were as old as you looked, and they would find it out by and by."

"It was very unkind of Frederick to say that," observed Frank, colouring.

"I do not think he meant it unkindly; but he always laughs when the rest do."

"And who is Philip Doyle?"

"One of the cleverest boys, and one of the greatest tyrants in the school. I would do anything rather than offend him. When once he works himself into a passion, it is quite terrible to see him; and a very little will do it."

"Who is it now talking to my cousin, and looking at us?"

"Claude Hamilton. He is very clever too. Every one loves Claude Hamilton. It was he who interfered just now, when they were going to tease you for crying. I am sure it is only natural to cry when one comes to school for the first time."

"It may be natural, but I am afraid that it was very foolish," said Frank; "and I do not mean to cry again if I can help it."

There were no lessons that evening. It seemed a very long evening to Frank. Frederick never once approached him until just before bed-time, when he came to warn him not to be too intimate with young Howard.

"He is the greatest dunce in the school," said he, "and a coward as well: the less you have to do with him the better."

"He was very kind to me," answered Frank, a little bitterly, "when no one else came near me."

Frederick coloured.

"I warned you beforehand," said he, "that you must fight your own battles."

"And so I will. But even if you are not on my side, surely you need not be against me."

"Who said I was against you? Did Howard say so?"

"Never mind," answered Frank. "I do not want to quarrel with you, or for you to quarrel with any one else on my account. But I did think it hard, when your dear mother said that we should be like brothers."

"Well, well," said Frederick, holding out his hand, "I did not mean to be unkind. But you must not expect too much. 'Every one for himself:' you know the old proverb."

"Yes," replied Frank, "I have heard it, but I never felt it before."

Mr. Campbell was surprised upon questioning Frank, the following morning, to find how much he knew, and how carefully and thoroughly he had been taught; and said a great deal that was highly gratifying to his feelings on the subject.

"Contrary to my usual custom," observed he, "I shall place you immediately in one of the upper classes; and it must be your care to prove that I am justified in so doing."

Frank thanked him gratefully, and promised to be very diligent. As soon as he had returned to his seat, Frederick congratulated him in a whisper upon his good fortune, and spoke so kindly that he quite forgot the past.

Frank was very happy attending to his studies, until the play hour arrived; and then, when all the other boys rushed forth with

glad shoutings, the old melancholy feeling stole over him again, as he stood forgotten and alone. His new friend Howard was not permitted to leave the schoolroom: he was often in disgrace. Frederick never thought of him. Frank listened to his merry laughter, and tried not to feel sad.

"Hollo, little one!" exclaimed Philip Doyle, shaking him roughly by the shoulder. "Are you going to cry again?"

"No," replied Frank, "I am not. As to being little, I cannot help that; it is no disgrace. '*Magnus Alexander corpore parvus erat*—the great Alexander was in stature small.'"

"Do you think that I could not have translated your Latin doggerel for myself, vilely as it was pronounced?"

"I do not know."

"What do you mean by saying that you do not know?"

"I mean what I said," replied Frank, fearlessly.

"For shame, Doyle!" interrupted Claude

Hamilton, stepping between them. "Surely you would not strike such a child."

"He is old enough to be impertinent, and had better keep out of my way," muttered Doyle, as he passed on.

"As for you, Alexander the Great," said Claude, with a smile, "I would advise you in future not to rouse the slumbering lion, or quote Latin out of school hours."

"He began," said Frank.

"Well, never mind. Are you not going to play at something? I will introduce you."

"But I do not know any games," said Frank, shrinking back. "I never played before in my life."

"Why, where in the world have you been brought up?"

"My father was always ill," pleaded Frank, "and I never left him until now."

"Ah, I see; that is what makes you look so pale and sickly. But you can learn, cannot you?"

"To be sure I can, if any one will teach and have patience with me."

"Come along then. But you must not mind being laughed at."

"I will not, if I can help it."

But Frank could not always help it, although he persevered notwithstanding. When they told him that he held the bat like a girl, he tried again and again until he had succeeded in doing better. In all his little trials, Frederick's laugh seemed the hardest to bear; but Claude Hamilton stood his friend, and he tried not to care for it.

Poor Frank was not strong, and soon grew weary, especially just at first; and used to fling himself down upon the ground with a beating heart and throbbing temples. Oh! how he wished himself back in his father's quiet study at such times. But he forbore to complain, and few guessed how much he suffered.

He wrote home in a cheerful spirit, merely mentioning that he was learning to play cricket. His father little dreamed of the fatigue and mortifications which he cheerfully endured. The same unselfish affection

marked that father's reply; in which he dwelt largely on the slight improvement visible in his own health, and said nothing of the long hours of weariness and depression in which his litttle companion was so sadly missed.

CHAPTER VI.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS.

Before long, Frank had other and harder trials than learning to play cricket: such trials as all must expect to endure, more or less, who would live godly in Christ Jesus. The days of martyrdom are past; but even a schoolboy may bear his faithful and unflinching testimony to his Master's cause, and fearlessly take to himself the sweet consolation of Scripture, "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

"Did I not warn you of all this?" said Frederick, upon one occasion, when Frank could not help feeling a little "troubled" for the moment, but it was only for a moment. "Did I not tell you how you would be laughed at?"

"Yes, you warned me, and that was all that you did do. You never helped me; but please God, I will help myself."

"That is right, Netherton," exclaimed Claude Hamilton, encouragingly. "Rome was not built in a day. I prophesy that the time will come when no one will venture to laugh at you."

"Thank you," said Frank, "I can bear being laughed at in a good cause."

"And what is the good cause at present in dispute?"

Frank was silent; but Howard answered for him.

"The boys call him a Methodist, because he reads his Bible every morning and evening, and says long prayers—longer, that is, than any of the rest of us."

"The latter may easily be, I should imagine. But what harm is there in Netherton's reading his Bible?"

"I do not know; unless it is because none of the other boys do the same."

"The more is the pity. But you must not

be too sure of that, Howard; only they may not read it so openly as your friend Netherton."

"When I was at home," said Frank, "I had a little room to myself; but it is not so now. And after all there is nothing to be ashamed of. We need only be ashamed when we do wrong."

Claude Hamilton coloured slightly.

"Shake hands, Netherton," exclaimed he, "for I am as bad as you are. I also read my Bible every morning and night; and I hope to do so as long as I live."

"I am so glad," said Frank; and the tears came into his eyes. "I wish you slept in our room."

"So do I," answered Hamilton. "We may be together some day, perhaps."

"Then you are a Methodist too," exclaimed Howard.

"Yes, as much as Netherton is," replied Hamilton, looking fearlessly round. "So laugh away all of you." But no one ventured to laugh at Claude Hamilton.

From that time Frank's heart yearned towards him, and he longed to deserve and gain his friendship; although he scarcely dared to hope that one so much his superior would ever be brought to regard him as a friend.

Frederick was partly right in warning his cousin against being too intimate with Howard. But Frank could not forget that he had been the first to be kind to him, or be unmindful of his evident affection. He was not a boy whom he could love, or make a friend of, because he did not respect him; but he could not avoid pitying him very much, and was always ready to help him out of his difficulties as far as it lay in his power.

The time came, however, when even Frank was tempted to desert him. Howard had no punishment to bear; no hard lesson to learn. He was not obliged to remain in the schoolroom alone, when all the rest were enjoying themselves without; but he was afraid to go among them, for he knew that no one would

speak to or play with him. To screen himself, he had told tales of one of his schoolfellows, and the rest had hooted him out of their society. Frank alone lingered, and looked back.

"If you show yourself his friend now," said Frederick, "everybody will think you just as bad as he is."

"As for that, I do not much care what 'everybody' thinks, and I do not think myself that I ought to leave him now he is alone and in trouble. He is not my friend, but he was kind to me when no one else was."

"Let him go," said Doyle, laying hold of Frederick's arm, and pulling him away. "You know the old adage—'Birds of a feather flock together.'"

His mocking laugh rang in Frank's ears as he rejoined Howard.

"How kind of you to stay, Frank! But are you not afraid of being seen with me!"

"I am not afraid of anything."

"I wish I was not, for then I should not

have told as I did about poor Rushton. I suppose they will never forget it."

"Never is a long time. It was a wrong and cowardly action. You must tell Rushton how sorry you are; and you must never do it again, come what may."

"Never, never—that is, I hope that I shall not. But I am always doing wrong; and it is of no use trying to do otherwise. And after all, there is no one who cares for me. I have no father, no mother, no friend in the world."

"You must not say that," replied Frank. "Have you forgotten One who has promised to be the Father of the fatherless—who has said, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you'—who is the Friend of the friendless, the Saviour of sinners, the good Shepherd, seeking after the lost sheep; and, not content with bidding them follow him, bearing them in his arms, and upon his bosom?"

"I know very little of these things," said Howard; "I wish that I knew more."

"You will not learn by wishing," replied Frank. "You must read your Bible, and ask God to help you to understand it. You have a Bible, I suppose?"

"I believe so."

"You only believe so. Oh, Howard! But we will look to-night when we go to bed, and if not I can lend you mine."

"You are very kind," said his companion, hopelessly. "And will you be my friend, and help me?"

"I cannot promise to be your friend; but I will help you willingly, whenever I can be of any assistance, because you were kind to me the first day I came to school."

"That was a happy day for me," said Howard. "I never liked any one as I do you. But I deserve that you should despise me."

"I have too many faults of my own to dare to despise any one," answered Frank.

"But what do you advise me to do?"

"Go at once to Mr. Campbell. Tell him how sorry you are for what has occurred;

and ask him to forgive Rushton, or else permit you to share his punishment. You would not mind a hard lesson, would you?"

"No, it is not that; but I am afraid of speaking to Mr. Campbell."

"Nonsense! Think how pleasant it would be if you could carry Rushton his pardon, and ask him to be friends with you. If not, you can tell him how sorry you are for what you have done. Rushton is a warm-hearted boy, notwithstanding his provoking ways and speeches."

"I have a great mind to try," said Howard.

"Come at once, then, before the rest return."

Frank went with him, and even knocked at the study door; and when they heard Mr. Campbell's voice bidding them come in, there was nothing left for Howard but to enter.

When Frank returned to the play-ground, many a mocking voice inquired where his friend Howard was.

"We must take care what we do," said

Doyle, "or Netherton will be turning tale-bearer next."

"Not I," exclaimed Frank, "if I died for it. But I must say that I do not think it fair the way you all treat Howard. He has done wrong, and he is very sorry: what more would you have?"

"Hear him!" exclaimed Doyle, with a laugh.

At that moment Rushton and Howard entered the playground hand in hand, and it soon got whispered about how the latter had gone to Mr. Campbell to beg Rushton off; and even offered to share his punishment. Many of the boys went up and shook hands with him.

"It was well done," said one. "I did not think that it had been in him."

"Little Netherton was right," observed another. "Let us say no more about it. He has had his lesson."

Frederick Mortimer sided, as usual, with the multitude; while his cousin kept apart, for fear that Howard, in his gratitude, should

betray him. The sight of his radiant-looking face was happiness enough. As soon as he could, he stole away and re-entered the house. Claude Hamilton was leaning against the door, and, as he moved aside to let Frank pass, he said in a low sweet voice, "'Blessed are the peacemakers.'"

CHAPTER VII.

A SABBATH DAY AT SCHOOL.

Although Frank—thanks to the pains which his father had taken with him—knew more than most boys of his age, he was totally unaccustomed to the regular mode of instruction to which he was now obliged to submit; and it cost him no little pains to maintain his position in the class in which Mr. Campbell, misled by his ready and correct answers to his questions, had first placed him. His present systematic course of study was neither so easy nor so pleasant as it had been; to listen to the eloquent and instructive conversation of Mr. Netherton, and turn with him to maps, globes, pictures, and books of reference. Frank's memory had become a kind of treasure-house, but it sadly wanted method and arrangement.

Mr. Campbell was not long in discovering the error which he had committed. He said little upon the subject, but kindly and patiently assisted Frank to correct it; and the more cheerfully when he saw how willing he was to assist himself, and how hard he worked in order to maintain his present position. Mindful of his aunt's injunctions, Frank took all the exercise he could out of school hours; and his health, so far from suffering from his severe application at other times, seemed to be slightly improved; and he dwelt with pleasure upon the delight which it would give his father to see him so changed. His cousin found him, one day, looking intently at himself in the glass. He wanted to see if there were any traces of colour on his pale cheeks; but he found none as yet.

It was a rule in Mr. Campbell's house to lay aside all tasks on the Sabbath day, making it, as it ought and was intended to be, a day of rest. Outwardly at least, no books were read but those of a religious tendency; but the absence of Mr. Campbell generally proved a

signal for the production of others of a totally different character. What shocked Frank more than anything else was, to observe that many of the boys concealed these stolen volumes within the covers of their Bibles, which they thus appeared to be diligently perusing. Notwithstanding his horror of such duplicity, the books were a great temptation; and it cost him many a struggle to refuse to read them when they were offered to him.

"If you would only lend it to me to-morrow," said he, upon one occasion—

"Now or never!" replied Rushton.

"Then it must be never," said Frank.

"It is such a beautiful story," observed Howard, "about two Indian children, who were accidentally carried out to sea in the boat in which they were playing, and cast upon a desert island. I am sure that you would like it."

"I dare say I should," said Frank, turning resolutely away. But he could not help wondering to himself what the children did on the desert island; and was glad when Mr. Camp-

bell came in, after his usual custom on the Sabbath evening, to read and talk with them. And when he laid his hand upon his shoulder, and spoke kindly to him as he passed, Frank felt pleased that he had done nothing to deceive him; and thought how he should have winced at his touch, and shrunk away from his glance, had it been otherwise.

They read that evening the eighteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The twenty-eighth verse came to Frank; but he paused, and remained silent.

"Well?" exclaimed Mr. Campbell, inquiringly.

"I was just thinking, sir, how far the eunuch came to worship."

The boys looked at one another and smiled; but Mr. Campbell answered gravely.

"Yes, Frank, it is worth observing. African Ethiopia lies below Egypt; he must therefore have come some hundreds of miles to worship at the temple."

"But he had his reward, sir."

"Yes, my boy. Now let us finish the

chapter, and afterwards I will show you a picture which I have of the eunuch's well."

The chapter was concluded, and the picture produced. It was beautifully finished from a drawing made on the spot, and Frank bent over it in silent admiration.

Claude Hamilton inquired what the old ruins, visible in the vicinity of the well, were supposed to represent.

"They are imagined to be those of some ancient church, or convent, which formerly stood on this spot," replied Mr. Campbell; "but nothing certain is known on the subject. I have heard it maintained that it could not have been here that the eunuch was baptized, because he is represented to have come in a chariot from Jerusalem, whereas this road is not passable for carriages. Chariots of old, however, were very different from our present coaches, the wheels being lower, and much broader and stronger; and the vestiges of an ancient carriage road are yet to be perceived all the way from Jerusalem to Hebron. Still it is very uncertain whether this was the place

where the eunuch was baptized. I have several other views taken in the Holy Land, which I will show you at some future opportunity."

"I suppose it was called the Holy Land because the Holy one lived and walked there," said Frank, thoughtfully. "How I should like, when I am old enough, to go to Jerusalem, and tread, as it were, in the footsteps of the Saviour!"

"You may endeavour to do that without going to Jerusalem, or waiting until you are older," said Mr. Campbell.

"Yes, sir, I know," replied Frank, colouring; "but I did not exactly mean that."

"Never mind. It is better to act than to dream. With God's help, you may begin at once practically to follow in the footsteps of the blessed Redeemer when he walked on earth; to take up your cross and learn of him, and be meek and lowly in heart; while it must necessarily be many years, if ever, before you visit the Holy Land. What I say to you I say to all."

After a pause, Mr. Campbell asked Howard which was the oldest book in the world.

"Homer, sir."

Mr. Campbell shook his head.

Rushton in a whisper to his companions, suggested "Robinson Crusoe."

"Well, Mortimer, can you tell?"

"The Bible, sir."

"Right. Herodotus and Thucydides, the oldest profane historians, whose writings have reached our times, were contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah, the last of the historians of the Old Testament. It was nearly six hundred years after Moses before the poems of Homer appeared. The preservation of the Bible is very remarkable. At one time, during the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, not only their temple was burned, but the very ark in which the original copy of the law was kept; and their city laid waste for more than a hundred years. We read, also, that Antiochus Epiphanes, when he took Jerusalem, murdered about 40,000 of its inhabitants, sold as many more to be slaves, and ordered that

whoever was found with the book of the law should be put to death; and every book that could be discovered was burned. Under these circumstances, is it not remarkable that this book of the Jews should have been preserved, and that not a single book of the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, or the Phœnicians, the earliest flourishing and civilized nations, should have reached us?"

"It is indeed remarkable," said Claude Hamilton.

"God took care of the Bible," suggested Frank.

"That is the right and only way of accounting for it," said Mr. Campbell.

"Is it true," asked Philip Doyle, "that a Bible in the reign of king James cost seventy pounds?"

"Perfectly true. We are also told by Toplady, that time was when the word of the Lord was so precious in the land, that a farmer in the reign of Henry VIII. gave a cart-load of hay for one leaf of the Epistle of St. James in English."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Howard.

"Yes; it appears strange now, when Bibles are so cheap that few, we should think, need be without one in their homes. But it is growing late."

"Now for black Monday, and hard lessons," said Howard to Frank, as they went up-stairs to bed.

"I have often thought," replied Frank, "how nice it would be to have no Monday morning. But we must wait till we get to heaven for that."

"How do you know you will ever get to heaven, little one?" asked one of the boys, jestingly.

"How do I know? O Herbert! do you not believe in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? But you only say this to tease me."

"You are a strange fellow, Netherton," exclaimed Herbert, touched by the earnestness with which he had spoken. "Good night."

"Good night," replied Frank. His little

heart was full. "How do I know?" thought he, as he kneeled down beside the bed, forgetting that he was not alone. "Dear Lord Jesus! because I believe and trust in thee. Oh, how sweet it is to believe and trust!"

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES.

The following morning, when Frank entered the play-ground, Claude Hamilton came to meet him with a smile on his countenance.

"See," exclaimed he, "I have brought you the book which you refused yesterday. I thought you would like to read it."

"And so I shall," said Frank. "How kind of you to think of it! But how came you to know what happened yesterday? I looked at you once or twice, and you appeared to be completely absorbed in your favourite 'Keith's Prophecies.'"

"So I was; but I heard all that passed notwithstanding, and was glad that you were able to resist the temptation. I determined to procure the book for you if possible to-day,

and here it is. But you must read it quickly. You will find it very interesting."

Frank thanked him gratefully, and ran off with his prize to a large tree which stood at the further end of the play-ground, and in the branches of which he loved to sit and read, swinging himself to and fro all the while with a pleasant motion. It was not often that he permitted himself to indulge in this quiet luxury, and he consequently enjoyed it all the more upon the present occasion. Frank was in the very middle of the story, when he was suddenly interrupted by the loud voice of Philip Doyle, desiring him to come down directly, as he wanted to take his place.

"At any rate I must finish my book first," said Frank, calmly. "I shall not be very long."

"Just as if I should wait while you finish your book! Come down at once, or I will make you. You have no business there."

"I did not know that the tree was yours," said Frank.

"Never you mind whose it is, but come

down directly." And he gave one of the branches a violent shake as he spoke.

"Thank you," exclaimed Frank, laughing, and swinging backwards and forwards. "It is very pleasant."

"You had better come down," said Howard, who, together with several other boys, had been attracted to the spot. "There is another tree almost as good."

"I will come down when I have finished what I am about," replied Frank, "and not before."

"Take care, Doyle!" exclaimed Herbert, as he again shook the tree with violence. "Take care, Netherton! He might break a limb if he fell."

"Then why does he not come down quietly, when I bid him?"

"Why should he?"

"Tell us a story, Netherton," called out several of the boys, out of fun.

"With all my heart," replied Frank, as a sudden thought came into his mind. "Once upon a time—"

"Will you come down?" shouted Doyle, hoarse with passion.

"Keep off. Wait until he has told his story. He shall not be interrupted till then!" exclaimed the boys, laughing, as they gathered around the tree. "Go on, Netherton."

"During the war with France," said Frank, "previous to the Revolution, an English drummer boy, having wandered from his camp too near the French lines, was taken prisoner, and brought before the commander. On being asked who he was, he answered that he was a drummer in the English service. It appears that they took him for a spy. A drum was sent for, and he was desired to beat a couple of marches, which he immediately did. The Frenchman's suspicions, however, not being entirely removed, he commanded the drummer to beat a retreat. 'A retreat, sir?' replied the boy; 'I do not know what that is.'"

"Bravo, Netherton!" exclaimed his schoolfellows. "You deserve your seat, and shall

keep it. You shall not 'beat a retreat' for any one."

They bore off the struggling Doyle in triumph, and Frank was left alone; but somehow their praise did not make him happy.

"After all," murmured he, "I could have finished my book just as well anywhere else. I wish now that I had given up; and so I would if he had asked me kindly."

He tried to go on with his reading, but the story seemed to have lost all its interest; and a few moments afterwards he slipped quietly down from the tree, and went to seek Philip Doyle. He found him, as he had expected, all alone. He was leaning against the gate, carving the top of a walking-stick into a lion's head. He looked up at Frank's approach, and his face was white with passion.

"I am come to tell you that you can have the seat now, if you wish it. I would have given it up at once if you had only asked me properly; but I do not like being ordered to do a thing."

Doyle made no reply; but, carried away by the violence of his passion, he lifted up the heavy stick he was carving, and hit Frank a blow with it upon the temple, which felled him to the ground. Doyle walked away without perceiving the effects of his cowardly attack. He did not think how heavy the stick was, nor intend to have hurt Frank as much as he had done. When he was in one of his passionate fits, he never thought of anything, and was like a mad person.

For several moments Frank lay completely stunned. When he came to himself, he arose with difficulty; and gaining the house, without meeting any of his companions, went up stairs into his room, and kneeling down by the bed, rested his aching head against it. He tried to pray, but his thoughts were too confused. Presently he took out his little Bible, and opening it at the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, read thus: "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you —and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be

the children of your Father which is in heaven."

"It is a hard lesson," murmured Frank. "Dear Lord Jesus! help me to learn it by heart."

He was aroused, after a few moments, by the voice of the housekeeper. "Hollo, Master Netherton!" exclaimed she; "you are breaking rules. You have no business up here at this time of the day.

"I wanted to bathe my forehead," said Frank, turning round.

"Poor child! you have hurt yourself indeed. Why, how did this happen?"

Frank did not reply.

"Well, never mind; come with me, and I will see what I can do for you."

Frank followed her, scarcely knowing where he went. His head ached terribly; but, after a time, the cold applications, tenderly applied by the rough but kind-hearted housekeeper, so far relieved him as to enable him to rejoin his companions in the school-room.

Philip Doyle, who was standing near the

door, started, and changed countenance when he looked at him.

"Why, Netherton, what is the matter?" exclaimed Claude Hamilton, coming hastily forward.

"It is my head," said Frank, trying to smile; and then stopping suddenly, and with difficulty repressing a cry of pain, he added, "It hurts me a little when I speak."

"How did you do it?"

"He looks as if he had been fighting," said Rushton. Frank shook his head.

"Did you fall off the tree, or did he do it?" asked Howard, pointing to Doyle.

"Never mind," answered Frank. "It is done, and it cannot be undone. I do not mean to tell you any more; and I wish you would not tease me."

"Leave him alone," said Claude Hamilton. "Does your head ache very much, Frank?"

"Yes, very much; but I dare say it will be better presently, if I could only be quiet." And Frank sat down before his desk, and buried his flushed face in his hands.

He did not sleep, but the hum of the school-room seemed to go a long way off: and the usher had to call to him two or three times before he could be aroused to reply. Claude Hamilton went immediately and asked Mr. Campbell to excuse Frank the remainder of his lessons, as he did not seem to be very well, and he was once more left to himself.

When Frank again looked up, aroused by the unusually kind voice of his cousin, all the boys had gone except Frederick and Doyle, who stood, with his back towards them, drumming against the window pane.

"Will you not come to tea?" said Frederick. "It may do your head good."

"Thank you, yes; I will follow you in a moment. I would rather that you did not wait for me."

"But you will come?" said Frederick, lingering a moment; while Frank passed his hand across his burning brow, as if to recollect himself.

"Yes, I promise you."

When his cousin left him, Frank arose with difficulty, and crossing over to where Doyle stood, said in a low voice, "Philip, the sun is almost down."

"Well, what of that?" asked his companion, without moving.

"Does not God say in his holy word—I forget where now—'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath?' See, it has nearly disappeared. Let us be friends."

Philip Doyle turned round, and the tears started into his eyes as he grasped the little feverish hand so eagerly extended to him. "Forgive me, Netherton," murmured he. "It was cowardly of me to strike you; but I did not mean to hurt you thus, indeed I did not: and I am very sorry for it."

"Let us go in together," said Frank, "and then no one will suspect that you did it. I promise not to tell."

There was a sudden silence when they entered the room. The boys looked at one another in astonishment.

"Then it was not Doyle, after all," whispered Howard to Rushton. "I dare say that he really did fall off the tree."

"Do you feel better, Frank?" asked Claude Hamilton.

"Yes, much better, thank you. I shall be quite well to-morrow, I hope."

Philip Doyle hoped so too. He was really sorry for what had happened; but he dared not express too great an interest in Frank, for fear of exciting suspicion. He shrank from the exposure of his own cowardly and brutal conduct to one so much younger and weaker than himself; and felt grateful to Frank for not betraying him to his schoolfellows.

CHAPTER IX.

A SAD HOLIDAY.

Those who slept in the same room with Frank, heard him, as they said, talking and telling stories all night long. The next morning he was in a high fever. The wound on his temple appeared to be much inflamed; and Mr. Campbell, who had been unavoidably absent from the school-room on the previous day, was angry because he had not been sooner informed of it. The best medical advice was immediately procured, and towards evening the fever appeared to be somewhat abated.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Frank, opening his eyes and seeing Mr. Campbell standing by the bed-side. "Where am I?"

"You have not been very well," replied his preceptor, soothingly. "But you are

better again—only you must keep very quiet."

"I remember now," continued Frank, raising his hand feebly to his head. "I hope I have not said anything. I hope I have not told who did it."

"No, no; lie down, and try to sleep."

"My mind wanders sometimes," said Frank, looking eagerly into Mr. Campbell's face; "and I do not know what I say then. I hope I have not betrayed any one."

"Never fear; your secret is safe."

"Thank God," said Frank. "I may tell him; but I must not tell any one else, you know."

Mr. Campbell abstained from questioning, or even replying to Frank's words.

"It is, then, as I suspected," thought he. "Who can have done this?"

Presently Frank spoke again. "Have you written to my father, sir?"

"Not yet. I shall await Dr. Ewart's opinion when he comes this evening."

"You do not think me likely to die, sir?"

"God forbid, my dear boy."

"Then do not write at all, please. I can bear a great deal of pain; but I cannot bear to think of my father's uneasiness. He loves me so much. Perhaps he would insist upon coming; and the journey might kill him."

"I will not write if you do not wish it; and if you will try and be still, in order that you may get better the sooner."

"Yes, I will be very still," said Frank, closing his eyes. "I will do anything you bid me—only do not write to my father."

He soon afterwards fell into a quiet sleep; and Mr. Campbell, leaving him in charge of the nurse, returned to the school-room. Every voice was hushed as he entered. Philip Doyle longed to speak, but dared not.

"I hope poor little Netherton is not worse, sir," said Claude Hamilton, at length, observing that Mr. Campbell looked unusually pale and agitated.

"I hope not. He has just fallen asleep. It may restore him, Dr. Ewart says, or he may awake an idiot! If Netherton dies, God

help and forgive him who struck that cruel blow."

Philip Doyle shuddered and turned pale; but so did many others at those solemn words.

"Then you think, sir, that the wound could not have been occasioned by a mere fall?" said Claude Hamilton.

"I am sure of it—and with reason."

"Has my cousin told who did it?" asked Frederick.

"No; he never will tell. And he must not be questioned."

Philip Doyle drew a long breath, and the tears gushed forth.

"Never mind, Doyle," continued Mr. Campbell, laying his hand kindly on his shoulder, "there is nothing to be ashamed of; your little school-fellow is worthy of your tears. I could almost have wept myself, to hear him talk just now."

"What did he say? Did he ask for me?" questioned Frederick, with the privilege of relationship.

"No, he never mentioned your name."

And Mr. Campbell briefly related what had passed.

"Poor little fellow!" said Claude Hamilton. "Who could have the heart to injure him?"

Hamilton knew nothing about the dispute between Frank and Doyle; and the rest shrank from mentioning it: it seemed such a terrible accusation to bring against him, and was contradicted besides by the friendly behaviour of Frank towards him on the previous evening. The whole affair seemed to be wrapped in mystery. Whoever the guilty person might be, every one felt that he was sufficiently punished in the anxious interval that would elapse before Frank awoke.

Mr. Campbell had given the boys a holiday —it was a sad holiday. A profound stillness reigned in the school-room, broken only by an occasional whisper: but thought was busy. We will not attempt to describe the feelings of Philip Doyle; their impression remained until his dying day. Recollections of unkind words and acts came back to many a heart, and made it wish them again unsaid and un-

done; bringing sorrow and repentance, when both, perhaps, were unavailing. Frederick recalled to mind his mother's often repeated injunctions to be kind to his cousin, with a pang of self-upbraiding. He remembered how the frail life of Mr. Netherton was bound up in that of his son; and he thought how differently he would behave to him in future, if Frank were only to get well again. Claude Hamilton had no self-accusations; but he loved and was sorry for the boy, and prayed inwardly that, if it were God's will, he might be restored to them.

As they sat together thus, the setting sun peeped into that silent room, as if to inquire what made them all so strangely quiet. Philip Doyle could not help thinking of Frank's words. "The sun is going down," murmured he, "and may never rise again for him. God be merciful to us both!" And he leaned his head against the window-sill, and sobbed aloud.

"Come, come," said Claude Hamilton, encouragingly; "let us hope for the best. If

not"—and his voice faltered slightly; "if not, Frank is ready to be taken, trusting in his Redeemer."

"I did not think that Doyle would have felt it so deeply," whispered Howard to Rushton. "He is sorry, I suppose, for what passed between them yesterday."

"Hush!" exclaimed Claude Hamilton: "was not that a bell rung? He must be awake."

A few moments afterwards, Dr. Ewart kindly looked in to tell them that Frank had awoke much better, and that he hoped all danger was past. "Thank God!" exclaimed Claude Hamilton; and many a voice was heard to say Amen. Philip Doyle uttered not a word. He felt as if a heavy weight was lifted off his heart, and it was filled instead with joy and gratitude.

"You have not written, sir, have you?" were Frank's first words, when he again opened his eyes, and fixed them upon the anxious countenance of his preceptor.

"No; I promised that I would not, if you

got better. And you are better. You feel better, do you not?"

"Yes," said Frank, "my head is much easier. Will you tell my cousin Frederick so, and—" he was going to say Philip Doyle; but he checked himself, adding instead, "and the rest of my school-fellows. I suppose I may see some of them to-morrow, sir?"

"I do not know," replied Mr. Campbell; "we must wait until to-morrow comes. Dr. Ewart does not wish you to talk or think more than you can help for the next few days."

"It seems hard not to be allowed to think," observed Frank, with a sigh. "But I must try and bear it as patiently as I can. Do not let me keep you, sir," added he, after a pause, during which Mr. Campbell was busy arranging his pillows, in order that he might lie more comfortably. "I promise to be very quiet. How kind you are to me!" And he put his little hand into that of his preceptor.

Mr. Campbell waited until he again slept, and then returned to the school-room, where the boys, by his desire, still remained.

"Let us return thanks to the Lord," said he, "that one among us has been this day preserved from the commission of a great crime. I never mean to ask any questions on the subject. The name of the offender is known only to God and that poor child who has refused to betray it. To his God I leave him. Let us pray." The boys kneeled down in silence; and that solemn day was long remembered by all of them.

CHAPTER X.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

Several days passed before Frank was allowed to see any of his school-fellows. His cousin was the first permitted to enter the sick-chamber; and, although he made no apology for the past, or promises for the future, Frank felt that he was changed, and that they should be more like cousins and friends for the time to come.

All Claude Hamilton's spare moments were spent by the bedside of the little invalid, to Frank's great comfort and delight; for there was no boy in the school whom he liked so well, or whose friendship and good opinion he was so anxious to gain. Howard was also a constant visitor; but Philip Doyle came not. At first Frank was glad.

"It is best so," though the; "they would only have suspected something." But, by and by, he began to feel hurt; and in the long, weary hours, when he lay suffering and alone, it seemed unkind and unnatural that he who was the cause of all should keep away thus, and make no effort to see and be with him.

"I would not have acted so," murmured Frank, on one occasion, half aloud. "I would have run any risk, had I been in his place."

"Forgive me," exclaimed a low voice by his side; "I shall never forgive myself. But I have not forgotten you, Frank. I have watched and listened at your door for hours, when all the rest were asleep; and every groan that you uttered went to my heart."

"I would not have groaned, if I could have helped it, had I known that you were there, Philip."

"O Frank!" continued Doyle, "if suffering can atone for doing wrong, you have been amply revenged."

"But it cannot; nothing but the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ can do that—'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' Besides, I do not want to be revenged."

"I wish I could feel like you, Netherton," said the once proud Doyle.

"You would not, if you knew all. Even when you entered, my heart was full of hard and murmuring thoughts."

"Yes, I know; you thought me a brute, and no wonder. It was not so much the fear lest the other boys should suspect something which kept me away; but because I dreaded to look upon what I had done. But this evening when I heard you talking to yourself, all alone, I could not help creeping in."

"It was very wrong of me to talk," said Frank. "Others might have crept in also. I have got into the habit of talking to myself of late."

"Does your head pain you very much?" asked Doyle, anxiously.

"No; scarcely at all now."

"O Netherton, if you had died!"

"I am glad that I did not," said Frank, "for my father's sake, and for yours, Philip. God has been very good to us all."

"He has indeed. It will be a lesson to me for my life."

At this moment Claude Hamilton entered the room. He was glad to see Doyle there, and told him so.

"You cannot think how anxious he was about you," said he, turning to Frank.

"Was he?" replied Frank, without looking up.

"If you had been his own brother he could not have taken it more to heart. But then we were all sorry for you."

"You are all very kind," said Frank.

"He is better than you expected to find him, eh, Doyle? It was a narrow escape. You are quite a hero, Netherton, and have behaved like one. Do you remember, Doyle, when some of the boys called him a tale-bearer, because he took Howard's part in that affair of his about Rushton? No one

will ever dare to call you a tale-bearer again, Frank."

"No, never again. But do you not think that the guilty person ought to be known and punished?" inquired Philip Doyle, suddenly.

"Certainly not. What good would it do Netherton, or any one else? He has been sufficiently punished: as Mr. Campbell says, let us leave him to God."

Being anxious to change the conversation, Frank now inquired after Howard, and asked the reason why he had not been to see him as usual.

"The old reason," replied Claude Hamilton. "He is in disgrace again. I never knew such a fellow; he is always getting into some scrape. He told me that he was afraid you would miss him, and guess the cause."

"I did miss him," said Frank. "It has been a very long day."

"It appears so to you, lying there; but I assure you that I have found it short enough for all I have had to do."

"Even when I am able to get up," continued Frank, with a sigh, "Mr. Campbell says that I must not be in a hurry to go on with my studies. I shall be sadly behindhand. No prize, and no healthy colour in my cheeks, to make amends for it, as my father said. Do I look very ill, Hamilton?"

"No, not very."

Frank sighed again: and as he did so he felt a tear fall on his hand.

"How dark it is!" said Claude Hamilton. "Suppose I ask for a light, and read to you a little?"

"Thank you, I should like it very much. Forgive me," added Frank, as he quitted the room; pray forgive me, Doyle. I had forgotten that you were by. I shall soon be well again, and make up for lost time. Who knows but what I may carry off a prize after all? It is only working a little harder. And now that we are friends you will help me, will you not?"

"I will do anything in the world for you, Netherton."

"Then try and cure yourself of those terrible fits of passion, dear Philip. Do try, for my sake;" and he put his little thin arms around the neck of his school-fellow, as he bent over him. "And ask God to help you, will you, Philip?"

"Oh, if I could!" answered Doyle, whose heart was completely subdued.

"I have heard," continued Frank, "that, among the superior classes of the Hindoos, it is customary to have in their dwellings a particular apartment, which is called '*Knodhagara*,' or 'the chamber of anger,' and into which any member of the household who feels himself to be out of temper immediately retires, remaining there until solitude has calmed and tranquilized him. We read, also, that Plato retired to his cave to be wise. Could not you manage to go away when you feel the fit coming on—somewhere where you can be alone, and think and pray?"

"I am not much used to praying," said Doyle.

"But if you only repeated the Lord's

prayer, it would keep away bitter thoughts. You remember that part where it says, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us?"

"I am not like you, Netherton. I could not come and hold out my hand to one who had injured me."

"Yes, you could, after a time. It was difficult at first," said Frank, thoughtfully. "Cicero's rule, not to injure any one unless previously injured, is easier to follow than that of Christ, who bids us love our enemies. It would be easier to forgive others if we could only remember how much need we have of forgiveness ourselves."

"You remind me of Archbishop Cranmer," said Doyle, "of whom it is recorded, that the way to have him for a friend was to do him an unkindness."

"Hark!" interrupted Frank; "Hamilton is returning. You will do what I ask you, will you not, Philip?"

"Yes, I promise."

"With God's help."

"With God's help," repeated Doyle, solemnly. "Good night, Frank."

"Good night," answered Frank, as Hamilton entered; "and thank you for staying with me so long. You will come again?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"What a strange fellow Doyle is!" said Claude Hamilton. "I did not think he had so much feeling. It is wrong of us to judge one another. I shall like him better in future for his kindness to you. And now, if you are quite comfortable, I will read you the conclusion of the history of the two children, who were cast away on the desert island."

"I forget where I was," murmured Frank. "How long ago it appears since I began it! How much has happened since then! I do not seem to care about it now; for, you know, it is not true. I would rather hear you read a chapter in the Bible, please."

"Would you prefer any particular chapter?" asked Claude Hamilton, good-naturedly.

"No, thank you. It is all truth there."

"His companion turned to the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and Frank listened, and was happy.

It is a happy thing to believe, as he did, that the Scriptures are all truth; to be able to "look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith," and feel ourselves accepted and forgiven for his name's sake. Thus only can we "serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." Out of Christ he is "a consuming fire."

CHAPTER XI.

THE TALISMAN.

THE next day Howard came as usual to see Frank, but he looked sad and dejected. "You heard, I suppose," said he, "what kept me away yesterday?"

"I did not hear the particulars."

"It does not signify. It was the old story. I am always doing wrong, and it is no use trying to do otherwise."

"Oh, Howard, you must not say that so often!"

"Why not? It is the truth."

"But have you really tried?"

"To be sure I have, again and again."

"And in the way you promised, Howard?"

"I forget now what it was that I did promise. I only know that I am weary of trying

Every thing goes against me. How do you manage, Frank, never to be in disgrace?"

"Because I have a talisman," said Frank.

"A talisman! what, a real talisman, such as we read of in fairy tales? I thought there was no truth in those things."

Frank smiled mysteriously.

"How I should love to see it! What is it like? Is it a ring that pricks you whenever you are about to do wrong?"

"No, it is a lamp."

Howard had read of Aladdin and the wonderful lamp; and he remembered something about a lamp invented by Sir Humphrey Davy; but Frank told him that it did not resemble either of those, but was called David's lamp.

"Was that the name of the inventor?" asked Howard.

"No; the lamp existed, although in an incomplete state, before David's time, but it was he who gave it that name."

"And what do you do? Do you rub it?" inquired Howard, still thinking of Aladdin.

"No; I read it."

"I understand now," exclaimed Howard, with a slight accent of disappointment. "You have been talking of the Bible all this time."

"Yes," replied Frank, "the word of God is my talisman; as David says, 'a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' And yet David's Bible was very short compared with ours; for he had neither the Gospels nor the Epistles, nor a great part of the Old Testament. But a lamp cannot give light if we shut it up and never look at it."

"I have no time."

"We are told by the Rev. Thomas Adams," replied Frank, "that when time is devoted to God, we are sure to have enough for all other uses."

"But I never can get up the moment I wake. And afterwards it is as much as I can do to dress before the breakfast-bell rings."

"And why cannot you get up?"

"I do not know. I never could."

"No more could I once; but it is easy

enough now. As some one says, 'You lose an hour in the morning, and are all day trying in vain to catch it.'"

"That is true enough," observed Howard, with a sigh. "But how does your talisman keep you from doing wrong, Frank?"

"By teaching me to do right, and warning me against the snares and temptations into which I might otherwise fall; and so proving 'a lamp unto my path,' without which I should be continually stumbling. In trouble and perplexity, it has always an answer ready for those who seek it in prayer and faith."

"I wonder what it would say to me!" exclaimed Howard.

Frank opened his little Bible at the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, beginning at the ninth verse. "Listen," replied he, "to what it says to all: 'Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not

slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

Frank ceased reading, and for several moments neither spoke.

"I will begin from this day," exclaimed Howard, at length, "I am determined; and read the Bible every morning and evening. I see now what made you, or rather helped you, to be so patient and forgiving; and why you would not tell who it was that had hurt you. I will try and make it my talisman also. I am sure I want a lamp, for everything seems dark enough sometimes: but it is my own fault. Oh that I could 'cleave to that which is good!'"

"My talisman likewise says," continued Frank, "and the words are those of our Saviour himself, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoye upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'"

"I should like to find rest," said Howard, wearily. "I have never found it yet."

"And you never will out of Christ. He is not a hard task-master. I am sure I may

say so," exclaimed Frank, with tears in his eyes. "What would have become of me if it had been otherwise?"

Frank might well say that. What would become of any of us?

That day Howard made a great many good resolutions. It was a pity that he forgot them again so soon.

A modern writer has truly observed—"It is with our faults as with horseradish: it is terribly difficult to extirpate it from the earth in which it has once taken root; and nothing is more discouraging to him who would banish this weed from his ground than to find it, so lately plucked up, shooting forth again and again from the old root which yet remains buried in the earth." Yes, it is difficult certainly, and discouraging; but let us take heart, and remember that nothing is impossible with God.

As soon as Frank was able to leave his room, Mr. Campbell had him carried into his own study, where he could remain quiet; and Frank was very careful not to disturb him

when he came in to read, or write letters. It was a pleasant room, with a low window opening on to the lawn, and commanding a view of the play-ground beyond. As Frank sat there, he could hear the merry voices of his school-fellows; and yet he did not feel sad, or wish to be with them. He was in a very peaceful frame of mind, for he knew that everything happens for the best. He wished that he could always feel as he did then; but the lamp, as we all know from experience, does not always seem bright. Every now and then a shadow comes across it, the shadow of our own sin and unbelief; and God appears, as it were, to hide his face from us. But let us wait and pray, and by and by the darkness passes away, and it is light again.

It was a sunny day; the boys had worked hard, and enjoyed their play afterwards. Philip Doyle alone remembered the little invalid; and he only knew whose fault it was that he was prevented from coming among them. As he crossed the lawn, he saw Frank sitting by the open window, and called to him. "Are

you alone, Netherton?" said he. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing," replied Frank, "but enjoying myself, as the good Mrs. Fry says, and giving thanks. What a beautiful day; and how merry you all seem!"

"Not all, Frank; I cannot be merry while you are alone, and suffering."

"I am not suffering now: and I do not mind being alone."

"But cannot I do something for you?"

"Yes, go away; and let me hear you laughing and playing with the rest. I do not say this because I want to get rid of you," added Frank, as Doyle turned sorrowfully back to his companions, "but because I want to see you happy."

"Then I shall stay with you," said Doyle; and he entered the study with a bounding step.

When Mr. Campbell came in some time afterwards, and found him there, he praised him for his kindness to his little school-fellow. Doyle received his commendations with a

flushed cheek and downcast eyes. He longed to tell him all. There is nothing more humiliating than to listen to the praises which we feel conscious we have not deserved.

CHAPTER XII.

THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

Frederick Mortimer gained one of the prizes, and his cousin tried not to feel envious.

"Never mind," said Howard; "it is not your fault. Every one pities you. You are not laughed at, and called a dunce, as I am. And a dunce I shall be all my life, I suppose. It is a good thing for me that my aunt would never dream of my bringing home a prize; so she will not be disappointed."

"We must see what we can do next year," replied Frank, cheerfully. "Your aunt may be agreeably surprised some day yet."

Howard shook his head despondingly. "I know I am a dunce," repeated he; "and I cannot help it."

"But Mr. Campbell says you are not a dunce, and that it is your own fault that you do not get on better; you are only careless and indolent."

"Did he say that?"

"Yes; Hamilton heard him as well as myself. Suppose we both try and begin a new year when we come back, Howard—shall we?—and see what we can do."

"I have tried so often."

"Never mind; try again. But you must not forget the talisman. You will never get on without that."

"You are right," exclaimed Howard, as the remembrance of his former resolutions came across him. "I will try again, and in right good earnest. I will turn over a new leaf, as the saying is, and see if I cannot make fewer blots."

Frank warmly encouraged him in this determination. Rushton, to whom Howard made a point of telling every thing that passed, and with whom, since their reconciliation, he had become very intimate, said that

it was a wise resolution, and he hoped that Howard would be able to keep it; but he was afraid. And as for the talisman, it was all stuff; and he should be sorry to see him converted into a Methodist, like his friend Netherton.

As the school was to break up so shortly, it was not thought worth while for Frank to recommence his studies; and the time hung heavily on his hands until the holidays arrived. Of the wound on his forehead nothing now remained but a slight scar; but its weakening effects were but too plainly evident in the pale cheek and heavy eyes, and were severely felt by Frank in his inability to fix his mind steadily on any object, and the intense headache which was the inevitable result of such an attempt. It was partly this feeling of incapacity which gave him a child-like longing to be home again, and seated once more at his father's feet in that little quiet study, listening to the old story of the child and the reapers.

It was all over at length; the distribution

of prizes, the cheerful and somewhat boisterous "breaking up," and the joyous parting of the school-fellows—joyous, because they were going home, and because they should meet again so soon. But all were not happy. At the distribution of prizes, Frank, as we have said, had a hard struggle with himself not to feel envious. Philip Doyle won the first prize, but it gave him little satisfaction. Howard looked on in despair. At the breaking up, Frank stood apart from their noisy mirth, and leaned his aching head upon his hands. He did not know that Doyle was watching him, and that the sight took away all his pleasure.

Their parting, notwithstanding all Frank's assumed cheerfulness, was a sad one. "What if he should never return!" thought Doyle, as he gazed upon his slight form, and pale, smiling face. "Take care of yourself," whispered he, as they shook hands; "for my sake, Netherton, try and get well."

"Never fear," replied Frank, gaily.

Claude Hamilton also mingled cautions

with his farewell; and was so kind and friendly that Frank felt quite happy.

The cousins enjoyed their drive home. Frederick was very cheerful and talkative; he said a great deal about his prize, which was the first that he had ever gained, and of which he was very proud, and longed to exhibit it to his mother and sister. Frank was soon able to enter into his feelings without a single remaining shadow of self-regret. But not before he had more than once had recourse in memory to his talisman, and recalled to mind that it is written therein, "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy. But he giveth more grace," James iv. 5, 6. And again, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not," 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

After a time, Frank's thoughts wandered; and he could not help wondering how he should find his father. Just before the coach entered the village, he turned to ask Frederick whether he really looked so very ill, and if the scar showed much.

"No, scarcely at all when you brush your hair over it; and the air has given you quite a colour."

"I am so glad," exclaimed Frank.

The first person they saw was little Helen, evidently looking out for them; for, as soon as she perceived the carriage approaching, she clapped her hands, and ran away to proclaim the welcome intelligence.

Mrs. Mortimer met them on the hall steps. "Your father is better," whispered she to Frank, as she gave him a hasty kiss. "He is waiting for you in the study. But, bless the boy! what has he been doing to himself?"

"It is nothing," replied Frank; and in another moment he was in his father's arms.

"God be thanked! God be thanked!" murmured Mr. Netherton, as he embraced him. And then, pushing him a little way from him, and trying to smile, he added, "What a fuss I am making about a few months' absence. Let me look at you, my dear boy. You have been ill!"

"It was only an accident," replied Frank,

carelessly; "it is all over now." But Mr. Netherton was not satisfied.

Mrs. Mortimer did not leave them long together. She kissed Frank again when she entered, with much affection, parting back the hair from his forehead as she did so; and then dismissed him to wash his hands, and get ready for dinner. "It is quite ready for you," said she. "I knew you would be hungry after your drive."

Frank forbore to assure his aunt that he was not at all hungry, and would rather remain where he was, for he knew that it would be of no use, and therefore went and did as she desired him.

"It is nothing," exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer, meeting her brother's anxious glance; "a mere scratch."

"But do you not think Frank looks pale and thin?"

"He is tired, and shall go to bed early. He will be all right to-morrow."

Frank was not sorry to go to bed early; and the next morning, as his aunt had pro-

phesied, he seemed to be quite himself again. He was always pale, and therefore, as Mrs. Mortimer said, it was no sign of ill-health. Nevertheless, she nursed him in her own quiet and judicious manner; and Frank was soon all the better for her management.

Frederick's prize received its due share of notice and commendation, especially from his sister, who was never weary of looking at it, and admiring the handsome binding, and the beautiful hand-writing upon the title-page, showing it to be the reward of merit. But it might have been observed that Helen never asked to look at it when Frank was by, or spoke of it in his presence. Her own kind, thoughtful heart taught her to act thus. Helen had become quite a favourite with Mr. Netherton; so much so that Frank told her he had a great mind to be jealous; and then ended by thanking her for her loving care.

It was settled that the two families should continue to reside together, and the arrangement seemed to give satisfaction to all parties.

As Mr. Netherton said, he did not know

what he should do now without his sister to manage everything for him; neither could he bear to be separated from the little, golden-haired child who had so wound herself around his heart, and whose very name was linked with fond memories of the past.

Frank was pleased to think that his father would have some one to cheer and amuse him when he should have gone back to school. And Helen, with her low, sweet voice, her winning and playful ways, and gentle countenance, always busy and helpful, and yet quiet and unobtrusive, was no unwelcome addition to that dear old study which he so enjoyed when at home, and thought about when away.

CHAPTER XIII.

MISSIONARIES.

FREDERICK related the history of his cousin's illness, as far as he knew it; and the mystery which still hung over its author: hinting that, now Frank was at home, and among his own family, there could be no impropriety in his disclosing, in confidence, the real name of the offender. "Not but what I have my suspicions," said Frederick; "but I should so like to know for certain."

"There are several things that I should like to know for certain," replied Frank, laughing. "I want to know who the man with the iron mask was. And what made the famous tower at Pisa lean."

"Some people say," answered his father, "with regard to the latter, that the ancient

builders, aiming at eccentricity, erected it as it now stands; while others conceive its reclining position to be occasioned by a sinking of the earth. The conjectures concerning the identity of the man with the iron mask are endless."

"But seriously, Frank," continued his cousin, "I should like to know who hurt you."

"Seriously, Frederick, you never will know from me."

"I think that you might trust us, Frank."

"You do not know how difficult it is to keep a secret," replied his cousin. "I can scarcely trust myself sometimes. Besides, it could do no good, and it might do harm."

"Frederick," said his little sister, archly, "I thought only women were curious."

Mr. Netherton told Frank that he was quite right; and so did his aunt. She then changed the conversation by asking him whether he had learned to play cricket yet.

Frank smiled, and referred her to his cousin for an answer.

"He understands the game," replied Fre-

derick; "but, to say the truth, I do not think Frank will ever become a first-rate player."

"Never mind," said Mr. Netherton, "one may do something better than play cricket; not but that it is a fine healthful game for boys. I remember being very fond of it when I was a boy. I suppose you found it rather dull at school just at first, Frank, before you knew any of the boys? What a comfort and support it must have been to have your cousin with you!"

Frank did not know what to say, so he remained silent; while Frederick coloured violently, and muttered something about not having yet seen the little grey pony; upon which Helen offered to show it to him, and they quitted the room together.

"Stay a moment, Frank," said his aunt, as he arose to follow them; "I want to ask you one question. Was Frederick kind to you at school?"

"He meant kindly, dear aunt. It would do me good, he said, to fight my own battles. And so it did; it made me feel independent."

"Frederick was right," said Mr. Netherton.

"Yes, right if he really consulted Frank's good, and not his own selfish love of ease."

"By fighting my own battles," added Frank, "I do not mean quarrelling with any one; but making my own friends, and maintaining my own right to act and think for myself, let who would laugh."

"But such battles are not fought without a great many hard knocks," said his aunt.

"Yes," answered Frank, "they are painful to bear at the time, but one is all the better for them afterwards. You must not be angry with Frederick, dear aunt; he did not intend to be ill-natured; and he was very kind to me in my illness." Mr. Netherton joined in pleading his nephew's cause; and Mrs. Mortimer promised to say nothing to him on the subject.

Every day, when the weather permitted, the cousins took long walks and rides together. Sometimes Mr. Netherton went with them, but they were oftener entrusted to the care

of a faithful domestic. Frederick had been accustomed to ride from a child, while Frank's natural fearlessness rendered him almost as good a horseman as his cousin. How the boys enjoyed those country rides and rambles together! And how grateful Mr. Netherton always felt to see Frank come in with his face glowing with exercise, and looking as animated and happy as he felt! But Frank's favourite place was still in his father's study, listening to his earnest conversation, and treasuring up every look and word with filial affection.

"Papa," said Frank, upon one occasion, as that sat together, "do you remember my telling you that I should like, when I grew up, to be a missionary? Well, I have thought a great deal about it since, and am still of the same opinion. The idea haunts me, and gives an interest to all my studies."

"There is time enough, my dear Frank, as I told you before, to think what you will be."

"But there is no harm in my wishing to be a missionary years hence, if I live—is there?

One of the boys has an uncle who is a missionary somewhere in India; and he writes him such beautiful letters. A few years ago, a fever broke out where he was, and many died of it; but he continued to go from house to house just the same, and was not in the least afraid. He knew that God would take care of him, he said, as long as he had any work for him to do. You cannot think what a brave, good man he is."

"Yes I can: thanks be to God, we have many such fearless and devoted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. But there are several requisites which a missionary must possess."

"Yes," said Frank, "he must have a thorough knowledge of the Bible to begin with: what you call heart-knowledge, as well as a head-knowledge. Then he must understand geography; and know a good many languages; and make up his mind to endure great hardships, and run great risks, if need be, for the glorious cause which he has undertaken."

"I did not mean any of these requisitions,

Frank; although all, I admit, are necessary. A missionary must be gentle, that he may win souls to Christ; watchful and consistent, lest his actions should contradict his words; zealous and persevering, amidst discouragement and persecution. He must be patient with himself and others; and content to cast his bread upon the waters, in full assurance that he will find it after many days. We may never know on earth what good has been done by a single sentence uttered in prayer and faith; a single action performed in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ. But you may become a missionary without going to India, or waiting until you are older. There are home missionaries, and I do not see why there should not be school missionaries. Should you not like to be a school missionary, Frank?"

"O papa! I never thought of that."

"I dare say not; we are all too apt to overlook the way of duty which lies nearest home, and to be marking out new paths for ourselves which we may never be permitted to tread. Do you not think that some of

your school-fellows are as ignorant of, and far more opposed to, the religion of Christ, than those poor heathens of whom we read; and that by taking every opportunity of recommending the gospel, by word, precept, and example, you may, with God's blessing on your humble endeavours, do almost as much good as if you went to India? I can guess what is passing through your mind, my dear boy," continued Mr. Netherton, as Frank bowed down his head, and rested it against his father's knees. "You are thinking, What am I? But remember who it is that has said, 'My strength is made perfect in weakness.' A little child, before now, has become, by God's grace, a home missionary. Will you try and be a school missionary, Frank?"

"Yes, papa," said he, "I will try."

"If you try earnestly and prayerfully, never fear but that God will give you something to do for him, although you are but a school-boy. And what a privilege to be permitted to work for God! I repeat it, you must be zealous in seeking for opportunities,

and watchful to improve them. You must be gentle, meek-spirited, and forbearing. Above all, you must be consistent and patient. Even if you should not succeed in benefiting others, the trial will scarcely fail to benefit yourself."

The entrance of Mrs. Mortimer put an end to the conversation; and Frank was dismissed to play with his cousins. He would much rather have remained where he was, and his hesitating and appealing glance was not lost upon his aunt; but she only shook her head, and smiled as she told him that the fresh air would do him good.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHAMBER OF ANGER.

THE more Frank thought of being a school missionary, the more humble he became. Few true Christians, we should think, ever set about teaching others without experiencing this feeling of unworthiness and self-abasement; and it is well if it lead them to depend less on themselves, and more entirely on Christ. Mr. Netherton had several conversations with Frank on the subject, in which he earnestly endeavoured to divert his missionary enthusiasm into home channels. It may be that he was somewhat selfish in this, and dreaded the thought of their separation hereafter. Even if it had been so, it was but natural. His conduct was, however, influenced by a higher motive.

Frank was careful to say nothing to his cousin, as he was well aware that he would only make it a subject of ridicule. Not that he minded being laughed at; but he feared lest it might appear presumptuous on his part.

Every one was sorry when the holidays were over.

"It is so delightful," said Frederick, "to have nothing to do but amuse one's self. I wish that there was no such place as school."

"But you would not like to grow up in ignorance," said Frank.

"Certainly not. I should like to be very clever without any trouble."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Frank. "What can be the good of talking so foolishly?"

"And where can be the harm, Mr. Gravity?"

"I have heard my father say, that the one great harm there is in wishing is when it hinders working."

"Well, Helen, have you no wishes?" asked her brother, turning towards her.

"Oh yes, a thousand."

"Go and tell Frank."

"May I?" asked the child, looking up timidly into his face. And then encouraged by his smile, she whispered only two—"that God would restore my dear uncle to health, and make me a better girl." Upon which Frank bid her try and turn them into prayers.

Frank did not feel the separation nearly so much as he had upon the first occasion of his leaving home. He was less uneasy about his father; and knew better what he had to expect for himself; besides which, he was anxious to commence his missionary labours.

The cousins spoke but little during the first part of their journey, until Frederick, arousing himself at length, declared that it was of no use making one's self miserable about what could not be helped; and unpacking a huge plum-cake which Mrs. Mortimer had given them at starting, began to eat and talk with great animation. It was well that his prudent mother had taken care not to make it too rich.

How different was Frank's reception upon his second arrival at school! It was the recollection of this difference which made him, after exchanging a hasty and cordial greeting with Philip Doyle, who was delighted to find him looking so well, walk straight up to Howard, without even waiting to shake hands with his favourite Claude Hamilton.

There were several new boys, and a new usher. The late usher was a good-natured, easy man, whom every one liked. The truth is, he was too easy, and that was the reason Mr. Campbell was obliged to part with him. His successor, Mr. Barlow, seemed likely to fall into the opposite extreme; and treated the younger boys, as Doyle said, like the ground-ash, which is supposed to flourish the better the more it is cut and beaten.

After the first few days, every thing seemed to go on as usual. Philip Doyle, on the slightest provocation, gave way to the violence of his temper, almost as much as ever; but never to Frank. Howard was continually making good resolutions, and breaking them

again; but he persevered nevertheless, and really seemed at times, in spite of Rushton's sneers, to be making progress. Frederick continued to side on all occasions with the majority, without considering whether they were right or wrong, and as it very often proved to be the latter, he got punished in consequence. Frank played, or rather tried to play cricket, but was far more successful in relating all sorts of wonderful histories; suffered a great deal with headache; and quietly pursued his missionary labours, without any visible result. Hamilton studied hard, and talked a great deal to Frank about going to India, where his uncle had promised to procure an appointment for him as soon as he should be qualified to undertake it.

Poor Howard terribly tried Mr. Barlow's patience, of which that gentleman did not appear to possess a very large share. Upon one occasion, when he had been even more than usually dull and stupid, Mr. Barlow gave, or rather tossed him back the book, and desired him not to quit his place until he

knew the whole passage by heart. "I have told you that one thing a dozen times," said he; "but it is of no use—a more incorrigible dunce never existed."

"Please, Mr. Barlow, did you ever hear the anecdote Mr. Montgomery tells of the Wesleys?" asked Frank, looking up from his desk.

"Eh, what?" exclaimed Mr. Barlow. "I have no time for anecdotes: attend to your exercise."

"I have finished it, sir." Mr. Barlow looked it over, and found it to be correct.

"Well, let us hear what you and Mr. Montgomery have to say about the Wesleys."

"When they were quite children," said Frank, "their mother was teaching one of them a simple lesson, which he was slow to learn: even clever children are sometimes slow. She was very patient, but not so their father. 'My dear,' exclaimed he, at length, 'how can you tell that dull boy the same thing twenty times over?' 'Because,' replied the mother, gently, 'nineteen will not do.'"

"Well?" said Mr. Barlow, as Frank paused.

"Well, sir, you have only told Howard a dozen times yet."

Mr. Barlow could scarcely forbear smiling; and when the boys were dismissed shortly afterwards to their play, Howard was permitted to accompany them.

"I do not think that Mr. Barlow much relished your story, Frank," observed his friend Hamilton, with a laugh. "I would not advise you to play that game too often."

"It came into my head," replied Frank, "so I repeated it. After all, I do not think that he is really so very formidable; it is only his manner."

"He frightens me out of my wits," murmured Howard.

"Query," whispered Rushton to one, "whether he has any wits to be frightened out of."

"It is a pity," said Frank, "because it makes you blunder so dreadfully."

"Mr. Barlow always reminds me of the Greek poet Æschylus," said Philip Doyle. "You may remember it is told that an eagle,

mistaking his bald head for a stone, let fall a tortoise on it, and killed him—the poet, not the tortoise—on the spot. I thought of it all yesterday morning in church."

"It is to be regretted that you had not something better to think of," observed Claude Hamilton. "The poor man cannot help having a bald head."

"Perhaps not; but he can help being ill-tempered and disagreeable."

"In that case, I wonder that other people do not try."

"Do you mean me?" asked Philip Doyle.

"Yes, I was thinking of you certainly; and what a pity it was that those who live in glass-houses should ever throw stones."

"Or tortoises!" suggested Rushton.

"Do not provoke him," whispered Frank.

"They had better not," exclaimed Doyle, fiercely, "or it will be the worse for them."

"What will he do?" asked one of the boys, with a mischievous glance at his companions. "Will he knock us on the head as the eagle did Æschylus?"

"Come with me," said Frank, laying his hand upon Doyle's, which trembled with passion, but yielded, nevertheless, to that gentle touch; "I wish to speak to you a moment."

Doyle followed him mechanically a few steps apart.

"Well," said he, "what do you want?"

"Dear Philip," whispered Frank, "do you not remember what you said—what you promised? I know it is difficult; but God will help you, if you ask him."

"You do not know anything about it, Netherton," answered Doyle, but not unkindly. "You do not know what it is to feel as I do."

"It must be very bad," observed Frank, simply.

"Yes, it is very bad; but I will take your advice, Frank. I have not forgotten the '*Knodhagara*.'"

Frank pressed his hand in silence, with the tears in his eyes, and they walked together towards the house.

Doyle paused suddenly as he was about to

enter. "They will not think me a coward, Netherton, will they? And that I went away because I was afraid of them?"

"If they knew all," answered Frank, "they would love and admire you as much as I do."

"Let them think what they will," exclaimed Doyle, after a moment's pause. "It does not signify, does it?"

"Not when we are doing right," said Frank.

"My brave little friend!" said Doyle, laying his hand affectionately upon Frank's shoulder. "But go back now, for I want to be alone."

CHAPTER XV.

HEART SINS.

"I say, Netherton, what did you give Cerberus to quiet him?" asked Rushton, in a mocking tone, as Frank returned. "It would be worth knowing."

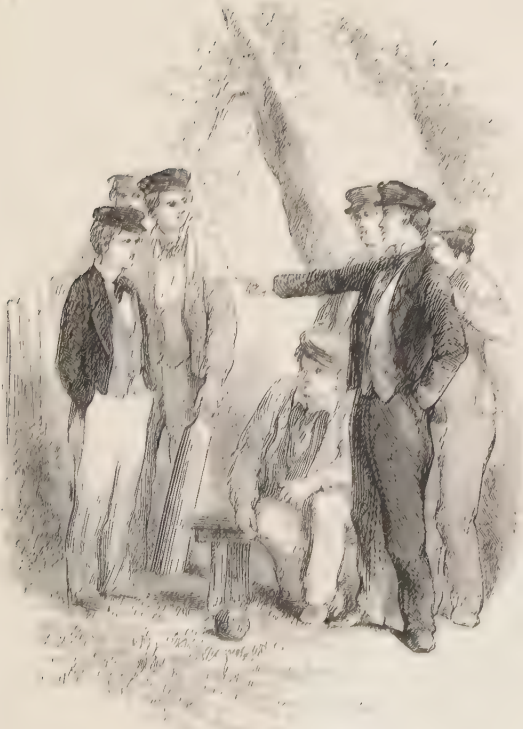
"How awful he looks when he is in a passion!" said Howard. "I declare he quite frightens me. I am always afraid that he will break a bloodvessel."

"He is more likely to break some one's head," said Rushton.

"I am sorry now that I said what I did," observed Claude Hamilton.

"Yes," said Frank; "I knew you would be."

"But he is so easily provoked: a mere word will put him out of temper."



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"Knowing this, we should be the more careful."

"Hear him!" exclaimed Rushton.

"You may laugh if you like," continued Frank; "but I do think Philip Doyle very much to be pitied. Instead of teasing and provoking him, we ought to try and help him to be better tempered, especially when we see him trying to help himself."

"Go on, Sir Orator!" exclaimed Rushton, in the same mocking strain. "Can you not tell us a story on the subject?"

"Yes," said Frank; "I can tell you an anecdote of a good and learned man, the celebrated John Bradford, who was so much in the habit of acknowledging that it is only by Divine help we are kept from sin and evil, that, upon one occasion, on seeing a criminal conveyed past his house to prison, he is said to have exclaimed, in deep humility, 'There goes John Bradford—but for the grace of God.'"

Several of the boys appeared to be struck by what Frank had said; but the incorrigible

Rushton continued to jest. "I propose a general thanksgiving," exclaimed he, "that we are not so passionate as Philip Doyle."

"If we are not as passionate, we have other faults."

"Speak for yourself, little one."

"I may speak for all," continued Frank; "for the Bible says that 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.'"

"How can you make yourself so ridiculous, Frank?" whispered his cousin.

"What is there ridiculous in speaking the truth?"

"Yes, it is true enough," murmured Howard. "We all have our faults; at least I am sure that I have mine."

"No one would dream of doubting such an obvious fact," said Rushton, with a laugh.

Howard felt hurt, for he liked Rushton; but he liked Frank better still, because he felt that he was in the right.

Philip Doyle was sitting at his desk when they re-entered the school-room. He looked up and smiled as Frank passed. "Plato has

come back from his cave," whispered he, "and is all the wiser."

Frank returned his smile, and felt very happy; but he did not stop, because he saw Claude Hamilton lingering behind as if he wished to speak. Doyle also noticed it, and asked him gravely, but not ill-humouredly, whether he wanted anything.

"Yes," answered Hamilton; "I want to tell you how very sorry I am that I vexed you just now."

"And I am sorry to be so easily vexed," interrupted Doyle, holding out his hand; "so let us say no more about it."

"Look, they are signing a truce," whispered Rushton to Howard.

"So much the better," answered Howard.

"How long will it last, think you?"

"For ever, I hope. I hate quarrelling."

"And yet you were ready to quarrel with me just now for not disputing your own assertion, and pronouncing you faultless."

"Yes," said Howard, thoughtfully; "we pray for more humility, as Netherton says,

and when the answer to our prayers comes we are angry."

"Hang Netherton!" exclaimed Rushton, turning impatiently away.

Frank was gratified by observing how often Howard, in his little trials and troubles, resorted to his talisman, as he still continued to call the Bible, from the study of which he seldom returned without an answer of peace. Another boy, named Herbert, who slept in the same room, and had been among the first to laugh at Frank for so doing, also began to follow his example. In a letter to his mother, he stated his reasons for this change: "You do not know how difficult it is to act religiously at school. Had I commenced from the first, as I promised you I would, it might have been easier; but I wanted courage, and put it off from time to time, until at last I began to join in the laugh against those who did. But there is a boy here now who has taught me, less by precept than example, how wrong it is to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. When he first came, and kneeled down fear-

lessly to his accustomed devotions, I secretly admired and envied, even while I teased him. Many a time have I suddenly extinguished the light in the middle of his reading; but Frank Netherton is not easily provoked. He calls the Bible his talisman; and I mean, with God's assistance, to make it mine henceforth. 'Ashamed of Jesus!' exclaimed the little fellow upon one occasion, when we had been laughing at him; 'what if Jesus should hereafter be ashamed of us?' What indeed, dear mother?"

Frank never saw this letter. Mr. Netherton was right when he said that we shall not know until we get to the kingdom of heaven, what good, or, alas! what evil consequences have been the result of our influence and example upon others. God forbid that it should prove the latter! It is a solemn thought, and should make us very careful.

It is far from our intention to describe Frank as faultless. It would not be natural: there never existed a boy who was. As he himself had quoted, "all have sinned."

Brought up beneath the eye of a tender and indulgent parent; taught, as it were, to be in love with learning from his very childhood, and of a naturally quick and intelligent disposition, he had neither the temptations of Philip Doyle, nor the discouragements of Howard to struggle against. The former was the son of a West Indian planter, and had been sent to England for his education: the latter an orphan, neglected, uncared for, and, as he had once said, alone in the world. The one had been spoiled by a weak but affectionate mother, and accustomed to play the tyrant over all who came in his way: the other had been cowed and laughed at by his more fortunate cousins, until he had become spirit-broken.

The same reasoning will hold good with regard to many other of his school-fellows, from whose peculiar failings Frank was comparatively free. But for God's blessing on the religious instruction which he had received, he might have been as they were, "without Christ, being aliens from the com-

monwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12.

If Frank was neither passionate nor easily provoked; if, instead of being dull, he was quick as well as diligent in his studies—for quickness without industry is of little worth: if he was no liar, but dared to speak the truth fearlessly upon all occasions; if he never told tales, and seldom got into disgrace; if he was not ashamed of the religion of Christ; if he had fewer obvious failings than some others, Frank had many, many faults known only to God and to himself, and against which he prayed, and wept, and struggled not altogether in vain.

Few guessed how difficult it was for Frank to restrain the hasty, and perhaps unkind retort; to keep back the clever but ill-natured sarcasm which came so readily to his lips. If he was tempted to utter them, he was always sorry for it afterwards; but that sorrow could not always heal the wound which his words had inflicted. Sometimes, when he

had succeeded in his studies, and Mr. Campbell had praised him, Frank's heart swelled with pride, and he was too apt to look down, at least in one sense of the word, upon those who were less clever or less fortunate. Very often he remembered to speak the truth, but forgot to speak it in love. And while he refrained from transgressing the rules of the school himself, was a little too hard upon those who were less strong to resist temptation. His zeal for God was not always "according to knowledge;" and he often feared lest he should have done more harm than good; and might have been heard to pray with tears, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel," Ps. lxix. 5, 6.

Truly has it been said, that "the heart only knoweth its own bitterness"—the bitterness of sin. We cannot hide ourselves from ourselves. But it is likewise said, that "a

stranger intermeddleth not with its joys"—the joy of peace and reconciliation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Frequently would Frank exclaim, in deep humility, "What am I, that I should set up as a school missionary, as a teacher of others, who have so much to learn? Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, for Jesus' sake."

CHAPTER XVI.

MISSIONARY THOUGHTS.

Mr. Netherton's parting gift on his son's leaving home the second time was a small gold pencil-case, of which Frank was not a little proud, and which he much valued. One morning, Mr. Barlow asked if he would mind lending it to him for a few moments, to mark some passages in the book he was reading, as he had mislaid his own.

"Certainly not," said Frank; "I shall have great pleasure." But when he came to look for it, the pencil-case was nowhere to be found. Frank was very sorry, and searched for it in every place he could think of.

"What can have become of it?" said he. "I would not lose it for anything."

"Never mind," observed Mr. Barlow. "I

dare say you will find it by and by. Perhaps you have lent it to some one else."

"I do not remember having done so," answered Frank. But, as he was turning over the contents of his desk, it occurred to him all of a sudden that he had lent it a day or two before to Howard, and that it had never been returned to him. When he reminded Howard of this, he acknowledged it at once, and that he had lost it.

"I have been going to tell you several times, but I was afraid," said Howard, "knowing how much you valued it. I intended to buy you another with the first money my aunt sent me, for indeed I am very sorry."

"And I am very sorry too," said Frank. "I do not want another pencil-case, for it would not be my father's gift, you know; and it was for that I valued it." Can you not think what you did with it, and where you had it last?"

"No; I have tried, and searched everywhere. I was afraid that you would never forgive my carelessness."

"I forgive you freely," said Frank, holding out his hand; "only I cannot help being sorry. But perhaps we may find it yet."

"Oh, I hope so," exclaimed Howard, more cheerfully. "I will look again in every place that I can think of. How kind you are to me, Frank!" Howard looked again and again, but the pencil-case was not to be found; and, after a time, Frank forgot all about it. He was working hard for a prize; too hard, so his cousin thought as he found him one day, with his elbows on the desk, and the hair pushed back from his contracted brow, wholly absorbed in his studies. On hearing his name pronounced, Frank started like one awakened from a dream.

"What do you want?" said he, shaking off the hand that rested upon his shoulder, somewhat impatiently. "I am busy."

"So I perceive; but you must not work so hard. It is not good for you."

"'It is better to wear out than to rust out,' as Bishop Cumberland says," replied Frank, without looking up.

"But what would your father say?"

"You are right, Frederick; thank you for reminding me. I will only just finish what I am about."

"Only just," repeated his cousin, laughing. "Come, we want you to play cricket."

Frank laughed too, somewhat incredulously. "I will be with you in five minutes," said he, "but I must master this first."

Frederick went away, and in five minutes the difficulty was mastered. Frank rose up quickly; and tossing aside the book with a triumphant smile, met the eyes of Doyle fixed sadly upon him and full of tears.

"Is anything the matter?" asked Frank.

"Nothing new, only the scar on your forehead shows so plainly to-day."

"Does it?" said Frank, drawing his hair forward in order to conceal it. "Never mind, dear Philip; but for that scar we might never have been friends. And we are friends now, are we not?"

"Yes, friends for life I hope."

"Do you think that I shall gain a prize?"

"Yes, I hope so; but you must not be too sanguine, or work too hard, as your cousin Mortimer says."

"It was kind of Frederick to think of me," said Frank. "Every one seems kind to me now. God is very good."

Frank's heart was full of thankfulness. It is easy to be thankful, and to say that God is good, when all things go well with us, although few, alas! remember to do so; but the difficulty is when clouds arise, and trouble comes, to see him sitting, as it were, above the waterflood. To know, then, that "God doth not willingly afflict;" to feel that he doeth all things well, and to be able to say meekly, "Even so, Father, thy will, not mine, be done,"—this is true faith.

Frank was gratified by observing that Claude Hamilton, so far from thinking it a condescension, frequently appeared to seek his society. Much as he liked Doyle, he liked Hamilton better still; and it was the height of his boyish ambition to be worthy of his friendship. Many were the long conver-

sations which they had together about India, and the good missionary of whom Frank was never weary of hearing. One day he confided to Hamilton his earnest desire to be a missionary himself, when he grew older.

"My dear Frank! what could such a little fellow as you do? Why, the savages would eat you up at a mouthful."

"But I shall grow taller and stronger every day, if I live."

"I hope so, the latter especially. Forgive my laughing, Frank."

"What sort of man is your uncle—in appearance I mean?" asked Frank.

"I can scarcely tell you, it is so long since we met. My childish remembrance of him is, that he was tall and slight, and somewhat bent; and that even then his constitution was much broken by toil and hardship. At that time he had to encounter great opposition from the natives; and many influential people held back from assisting him until they saw how things were likely to turn out: but God helped him."

"How cowardly to hold back," said Frank.

"It was cowardly; but they were very kind afterwards, and subscribed a great deal of money towards the schools."

"I would not have taken their money."

"Yes, you would, Frank, for the sake of the poor little ignorant children, who must otherwise have gone without the means of regular instruction. Besides, they were sorry for the way they had acted, and some of them told my uncle so, and begged that he would accept their offerings in token of forgiveness; upon which he replied that he had nothing to forgive, and that they must ask pardon of God, and not of him."

"That was right," said Frank, "and I was wrong. How I should like to meet him!"

"It is not improbable that your wish may be gratified," replied Hamilton, "as he talks of coming to England in a few years, if he is spared, to see his relatives for the last time. I shall most likely return with him to India."

Frank's anticipations of seeing the good missionary were somewhat clouded by the

prospect of losing his friend. "Shall you live near one another?" asked he, after a pause.

"Not very near, I believe; but it is uncertain. My uncle is so attached to his people —his children, as he calls them—that he seldom cares to be absent for long together; but I hope to find time to pay him frequent visits."

"Should you not like to be a missionary?"

"No," answered his companion, "I cannot say that I should. I do not think that it is at all my vocation. In the first place, I am too indolent; and in the second, I do not think myself good enough."

"Not good enough?" said Frank. "O Hamilton! what am I compared to you? And yet I have dared to think of being a missionary!"

Claude Hamilton was touched. "After all," said he, encouragingly, "there is no one in the world good enough to be a missionary in their own righteousness and strength. And you never did think this, Frank. It is your

favourite Leighton, I believe, who says, 'How can I, who am so vile, speak of God? Yet he hath shown me mercy; how, then, can I be silent?'"

"Yes," replied Frank, "that is just what I feel."

"Then dream on, my dear Frank: who knows but that you may one day have your wish?"

"Who knows?" repeated Frank, looking up, and smiling through his tears.

They were interrupted by the entrance of Herbert. "You must come directly," said he; "Mr. Campbell is in the schoolroom, and has sent for us. Some one has stolen all the peaches which he was so proud of, and which were to have been sent to-day to his invalid sister."

"What a shame!" exclaimed Claude Hamilton. "Who can it be? I hope they will be found out."

"So do I," said Frank.

CHAPTER XVII.

GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING.

They found the boys assembled in the school-room when they entered, and Mr. Campbell standing in the midst of them, and looking unusually pale and stern. "Are all here?" asked he.

"All, sir," replied Mr. Barlow, running his eyes over them.

"You are most of you aware why you have been summoned," said Mr. Campbell. "Last evening the peaches were quite safe, for I saw them myself, and anticipated the pleasure of sending them to my sister. I believe I openly mentioned my intention of so doing, and gave it as a reason for not touching them myself, or offering them to others. This morning at nine o'clock they were gone. It

is impossible for me to tell how many of you were concerned in this robbery—for I can call it by no lighter name—nor have I any means of finding out; but I have reason to know that only one stood upon the border and gathered the peaches from the wall, handing them most probably from thence to his companions; and I command that one to come forward instantly and confess his crime."

The boys exchanged glances, but no one moved. Curiosity rather than guilt was the prevailing expression of their countenances. Howard did not tremble or look more frightened than usual: and Rushton half smiled, as if he thought it highly improbable that the mandate would be obeyed.

Mr. Campbell repeated his command, but still no one moved. He then called them up and interrogated them separately. Doyle answered briefly and proudly, as if he thought that no one had a right to suspect or question him. Claude Hamilton knew that he was not suspected, and his replies were frank and cheerful. Rushton advanced, still smil-

ing; it might have been observed, however, that his lips quivered with emotion. Howard trembled so violently as to be scarcely able to speak; but then every one knew what a coward he was. Several of the boys stammered, and appeared confused, but were permitted to retire to their places, until at length no one remained but Frank. His denial was prompt and fearless; and the boys looked at one another, wondering what would be done next.

"Stay a moment, if you please," said Mr. Campbell, as Frank was about to return to his seat. "It is possible that you may be able to give us some information on this subject. I understand that you were seen walking in the garden this morning before any one else was up."

"I had a headache," replied Frank, "and could not sleep. I thought the fresh air might do it good."

"Did you ever try this remedy before?"

"No, sir; but I was not aware that it was against the rules."

"That is not the subject at present in dispute. Were the peaches gone when you were there?"

"I do not know, sir. I never looked, or thought about them."

"May I ask if you lost anything during your walk?"

"Not that I am aware of," replied Frank.

Mr. Campbell took from his pocket a small gold pencil-case, and holding it up, inquired to whom it belonged.

"It is mine," exclaimed Frank, eagerly. "I lent—" at that moment he met Howard's imploring glance, and added, somewhat confusedly, "it was lost above a week ago."

"And found this morning," said Mr. Campbell, "lying on the ground, immediately under the wall from whence the peaches were gathered. It caught my eye in a moment, and it is not likely that it should have remained there so long unnoticed."

"Impossible, sir," exclaimed Frank; "for I looked everywhere for it."

Mr. Barlow corroborated his account, by

mentioning his having wished to borrow the pencil-case of Frank; and several of the boys remembered assisting him in searching for it, and the sorrow which he had expressed at the loss of his father's present. Howard longed to speak, but dared not.

Mr. Campbell remained for some moments silent, and apparently lost in thought; until rising up at length, he said, that after what he had just heard, he should forbear from inflicting any punishment on the suspected person, until the subject had been thoroughly investigated. "It will give me the sincerest pleasure," added he, turning to Frank, who gazed on him with a bewildered air, "to find that these suspicions are without foundation."

"Sir! Mr. Campbell! do you—does any one think that I took the peaches?" asked Frank, suddenly.

"It must be owned that appearances are strangely against you," replied his preceptor. "But if you are really innocent, you have no cause for fear."

Frank did not reply. His head grew giddy, and he would have fallen but for the supporting arm of Philip Doyle. Mr. Campbell quitted the room without having perceived the cause of his silence.

"Never mind," whispered Doyle, kindly. "Not one here believes that you did it."

"No," said Claude Hamilton; "I will answer for that. Come, be a man, Netherton. It is only a passing cloud."

Several of the boys gathered round them with expressions of sympathy and encouragement. Frederick was among the number; but Rushton and Howard stood apart.

"What do you think?" whispered the former.

"I do not know," replied Howard, pale and trembling. "I dare not think."

Rushton looked earnestly at him, but said no more.

After a few moments, Frank aroused himself, and thanked them, with a faint smile, for their kindness. "What a comfort it is," murmured he, as if he were thinking aloud rather

than actually speaking; "what a comfort it is to remember that God knows every thing!"

"Yes, it is a great comfort," replied Hamilton. "He not only knows the truth, but will make it manifest in his own good time and way."

"It was a pity you happened to go out this morning, Frank," said his cousin, after a pause.

"Yes, it was a pity. I do not know what made me think of it. It came into my head all of a sudden."

"I wonder how Mr. Campbell knew that only one person stood on the border," said Doyle.

"Most probably from the impression of the footmarks on the mould," replied Claude Hamilton. "He was right in supposing that one person could not have eaten all the peaches."

"Whoever stole them," exclaimed Howard, with sudden and unusual bitterness, "I hope the peaches may choke them."

"That is going rather too far," said Herbert, laughing; "although I confess it would serve them right. One would think that the knowledge of their being intended for the sick and suffering would have insured their safety."

"I can fancy," said Frank, "the thief looking every way, and forgetting to look up."

"Or to look down either," added Rushton. "If he had, he would not have left his pencil-case behind him."

"It was my pencil-case," said Frank, boldly; "and he had no more business with that than he had with the peaches."

"Never mind," observed Claude Hamilton; "God looked down and saw everything."

"Rushton," said Howard, drawing him aside, "you must not say what you did just now. Frank is innocent; I could swear to it."

"I do not remember saying anything to the contrary. But what makes you so

earnest? Perhaps you know who took the peaches?"

"No," said Howard, sorrowfully; "I wish I did."

"What a fuss you make," exclaimed Rushton. "Do you think that Netherton would care if you were accused?"

"Yes, I am sure he would. He has stood my friend a hundred times: and then I was guilty, and he is innocent."

"That remains to be proved. As Mr. Campbell said, appearances are strongly against him."

"Mr. Campbell did not know all."

"I shall begin to think that you had a hand in it yourself, Howard, if you are so mysterious."

"I am not afraid of that. If you really thought me capable of such a mean and cowardly action, I am quite sure, Rushton, that you would never speak to or look at me again. And yet I am mean and cowardly enough as it is."

"I should like to understand you," said

Rushton, earnestly. "You used to trust me and tell me every thing before little Netherton set you against me."

"Frank never set me against you. He always took your part; and does not believe that you mean half what you say."

"That is taking my part with a vengeance. Then he thinks I am a liar?"

"Nothing of the kind. But you know, Rushton, that you often do say very strange and really wicked things: but then it is only in jest. Do you not remember that Frank mentioned it to you once; and observed that it was a pity, as it made you enemies? And I recollect his saying at the same time, that we have no more right to wound another's feelings, than we have to fling a stone and break their windows. And something more he said about our giving account of every idle word in the day of judgment; and the Bible says that too."

"As your memory appears to be so good, perhaps you recollect my reply."

"No," replied Howard; "I never remem-

ber unpleasant things, if I can help it; nor Frank either. But indeed you misjudge him."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Rushton, turning impatiently away. "I hate the very sound of his name."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A TIME OF TRIAL.

HOWARD took the first opportunity of being alone with Frank, to thank him for his kind forbearance, and assure him of his utter ignorance of the whole transaction beyond the fact of his having borrowed and lost the unfortunate pencil-case.

"Then why were you so anxious that your name should not be mentioned?" asked Frank.

"Because, because," replied Howard, bursting into tears, "no one believes what I say—not even you now; but indeed, indeed I am innocent this time."

"I do believe that you are," said Frank, holding out his hand, "and I am glad from my very heart. But you must allow that it did seem strange."

"Not at all strange. No one really suspects you—not even Mr. Campbell himself; I am sure of that. Whereas, had you mentioned having lent the pencil-case to me, it would have been useless for me to have denied the theft, or uttered a single word. I should not have been believed. They know me to be a liar; and that I am always in disgrace, and doing something wrong, and would only have laughed at and despised me."

"But you have not been in disgrace, or told an untruth for a long time, have you, Howard?" asked Frank, kindly.

"No; thanks to you."

"Thanks to God, rather."

"Yes, I mean that of course; but I must thank you also. I did begin to think I was getting on better."

"And I do think and hope that you are."

"O Frank! none but a coward would have acted as I have done. I deserve that you should hate me."

"On the contrary, I pity you very much, and am willing to stand your friend. After

all, it does not signify, as Hamilton says, the truth is sure to be found out before long."

"I would give anything to know who took the peaches," said Howard; "and how the pencil-case came to be dropped just there."

"We shall know all in good time," replied Frank, cheerfully.

Time, however, wore on without any further discovery being made. It was evident that the majority of Frank's school-fellows, whatever they might have thought at first, began to regard him with mistrust and suspicion. They no longer sought his society, or cared for him to join in their amusements.

"If it had been any one else," said they among themselves—and somehow every word was sure to reach Frank's ear—"if it had been any one else he would have been punished long since; but Mr. Campbell's eyes will be opened at last. I am glad that he is found out, and all such canting, hypocritical fellows. I told you from the first how it would end. Those who preach most generally practise least."

It is recorded in history, that when Catherine de Medici was told of an author who had written a violent attack upon her, she exclaimed with tears—"Ah! if he did but know of me all that I know against myself!" It was with something of this feeling that Frank listened to the reproaches of his schoolfellows. But when they came to attack through him the religion which, amidst all his faults and shortcomings, he so loved and reverenced, it was a bitter trial indeed, and hard to bear.

"If this is all the good that reading the Bible does," said one, "he had better leave it alone."

"Those who talk so much about religion are sure to be the worst," added another.

"The greater saint, the greater sinner!" observed a third, with a laugh, in which there were several found to join.

For once, Frederick Mortimer refused to side with the majority; and his affectionate sympathy was a great comfort to poor Frank. Doyle and Claude Hamilton also continued

unchanged. Howard pitied Frank, and despised himself; but he wanted courage to do what was right. He kept apart, and was miserable. His Bible—his talisman, as he called it—remained untouched. He dared not open it. Things might have been different if he had. It is often thus; sin and sorrow, instead of driving us to, appears for a season to keep us from the only true source of comfort. We feel unworthy to open our Bibles—unworthy to pray, to take the name of God upon our lips. We forget that Christ is worthy; that he died for us. We forget that even if we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who came into the world to save sinners. We put away the lamp—David's lamp, as Frank once called the Bible—and sit in darkness. Prayer, so sweetly termed by the good lady Warwick "heart's-ease," is abstained from, and we are miserable. Feeling ourselves to be sinners, we reject, through our unbelief, the all-forgiving Saviour. No wonder if we stumble in the darkness, and go wrong; no

wonder if our hearts ache; no wonder if we are unhappy.

Frank deeply felt the change in Mr. Campbell's manner towards him: a change in part assumed to hide his real feelings. He had seen a great deal of Frank during his long illness, and he could not believe him guilty; but he felt, nevertheless, that it was necessary something should be done, although he put it off from day to day in the hope of finding some clue to this mysterious affair, but without success. The boys exchanged glances when the summons came at length for Frank to join him in his study immediately after school. Howard trembled, and turned pale.

"What is the matter?" whispered Rushton, who was watching him narrowly. "I cannot help thinking, Howard, that you know more of this than you care to mention. Perhaps you suspect some one else?"

"No," answered Howard, "I have told you that I know nothing; I wish I did. I only know that Frank Netherton is innocent."

"I hope he will not be punished," murmured Rushton, in a low voice.

"Thank you—thank you, for those words!" exclaimed Howard, seizing his hand. "I hope not. Frank was right. He always said that you had a good heart."

"He had little cause to think so," replied Rushton, turning away.

Frank entered Mr. Campbell's study with a cheerful countenance. "Has anything been found out, sir?" asked he, after a pause.

"Nothing."

Frank sighed. "I am sorry for that," thought he, "but I must bear it as well as I can. God's time is not come yet; but it will come: no one ever trusted him in vain. Sooner or later everything will be discovered, and then Mr. Campbell will regret having punished me. After all, I do not mind a few hard lessons; it is nothing to the hard words I have had to bear of late."

"Well, Netherton," exclaimed Mr. Campbell, at length, "have you nothing to say for yourself?"

"No, sir, nothing but what I have already said, that I am innocent."

"You still maintain that the pencil-case was lost some days previous to the peaches being taken?"

"Yes, sir."

"So far some of your school-fellows seem to corroborate your account by mentioning their having assisted you in looking for it. Have you any idea where you lost it?"

Frank hesitated and coloured, and the consciousness that he did so added to the embarrassment which the searching glance of his preceptor was not calculated to remove. "I have no idea where it was lost," stammered he, at length.

"Is this the truth?" asked Mr. Campbell, sternly.

"It is, sir; but not the whole truth."

"And why not the whole truth? Take care, Netherton."

"Because—because I am not at liberty to tell you more, whatever you may think of me," replied Frank, in a faltering voice.

"There is but one conclusion left," replied Mr. Campbell, coldly, "and I am sorry for it. I shall write by to-day's post to your father."

"To my father!" repeated Frank, clasping his hands wildly together. "O Mr. Campbell! anything but that. I will bear the heaviest punishment you like to inflict upon me—anything but that. Spare my father!"

"On one condition only," said Mr. Campbell, after a pause, "that you immediately confess everything."

"There is nothing to confess," replied Frank. "I am innocent, indeed I am!"

Mr. Campbell regarded him with a stern, and yet sorrowful glance. "Netherton," said he, "I am deeply grieved and disappointed in you—grieved above all for your good father. It will, indeed, be a shock to him. You may retire now until I can think what is best to be done. In future you will study and take your meals alone."

"I will do anything—bear anything," exclaimed Frank, "if you will not write to my father."

"You have heard the conditions."

For a moment Frank was sorely tempted to break his word with Howard, and tell Mr. Campbell all; but it was only for a moment; after which, not trusting himself to reply, he bowed in silence, and went sorrowfully away.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONFESSION.

Howard and Philip Doyle sat together in the deserted school-room, waiting Frank's return. The rest of the boys were in the play-ground, and the sound of their merry voices came at intervals through the open windows. "Do you think that Mr. Campbell has heard anything," asked the former; "anything, I mean, to exculpate Frank?"

"I am afraid not. I suppose he will be punished. It is very hard."

Howard sighed, or rather groaned an affirmative.

"Hark!" exclaimed Doyle. "I heard the study door shut. Yes, he is coming. Now we shall know all."

Howard crouched down behind a desk, and Frank passed without perceiving him.

"Well," exclaimed Doyle, cheerfully, as he advanced to meet him, "so it is over at last. But how pale you look! You are not to be beaten, are you, Frank?"

Frank shook his head.

"Come, you must not give way in this manner. Never mind a hard lesson. I promise to help you all I can."

"You will not be permitted," said Frank: "henceforth I am to study, and even take my meals alone. But it is not that. They might have beaten me to a mummy, and I would not have cried out. Mr. Campbell is going to write to my father;—not that he will believe a word—he knows and loves me too well—but the least excitement makes him ill: it may kill him. O Philip! what shall I do? What will become of me?"

"My dear Frank, this is sad indeed. I scarcely know what to advise. We had better talk to Hamilton about it."

"No; there is but one person who can help me. Where is Howard?"

"He was here a moment ago," said Doyle,

looking round the room. "But I do not see what good he can do you. No one ever thinks of consulting Howard."

"I must see him immediately, nevertheless," exclaimed Frank, rising up.

"In that case I will send him to you, for you are not fit to move."

"Thank you," said Frank; "you are very kind."

Several of the boys now entered the schoolroom. Frederick, and one or two others, went up to Frank, while the rest stood apart and whispered among themselves.

"What will be done to him?" asked one.

"I do not know. Mr. Campbell is going to write to Mr. Netherton. That is what Frank feels so much. They say that his father is in bad health, and the shock may make him worse. Frank is his only son."

"I cannot help pitying him," exclaimed another.

"I should think that he would never have the face to preach to us again," observed one.

"Surely, surely Mr. Campbell will not

write." exclaimed Rushton. "He only says so to frighten Frank."

"Mr. Campbell seldom says what he does not mean."

Several of the boys whispered earnestly together.

"The only thing to be done," exclaimed Claude Hamilton, whose keen glance watched every movement, "is for the guilty to come forward and clear the innocent. Sooner or later their sin will be sure to find them out; it may be when it is too late to atone for it."

"Who volunteers to take Netherton's place?" inquired a mocking voice.

Rushton was about to speak, when he was interrupted by the entrance of Philip Doyle. "You cannot see Howard this moment," said he to Frank. "He is with Mr. Campbell in his study, where he went, it appears, of his own accord, almost immediately after you left."

Frank laid his head upon his cousin's shoulder, and burst into tears—but they were tears of joy and hope; while Frederick wept too, without knowing why.

"Even now," said Claude Hamilton, "my suggestion is perhaps in the act of being accomplished."

"But what can Howard know? What can he have to tell? No one thinks that he took the peaches."

"God knows everything," answered Claude Hamilton, loud enough for Frank to hear: and he did hear, and looked up and smiled.

"'Though he slay me,'" repeated Herbert, from the chapter which they had been reading together that morning; "'though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'"

Rushton hid his face in his hands, and sobbed aloud.

"Never mind," said Frank, soothingly; "it will all end well. Do not grieve for me."

Rushton started, and shook off the hand that rested upon his shoulder, with a quick, impatient gesture.

"Leave him alone," whispered Doyle. "He is a strange fellow. I do not know what to make of him of late. But I really think that he has a good heart."

"It is worth while being in trouble," said Frank, "to see how kind every one is." He forgot at that moment all their hard speeches against him. The trials of the past week faded away from his memory like a dream.

Howard had overheard poor Frank's passionate lamentation, as he crouched behind the desk, and his heart smote him for his selfishness. He arose up softly; and having succeeded in leaving the school-room unobserved, ran along the passage, and knocked hastily at the door of Mr. Campbell's study, who half-hoped that it might be Frank returned. "Come in," said he.

Howard's heart beat, and his knees knocked together as he entered; but he knew that he was doing right at last, and that gave him courage. In a few moments he had told Mr. Campbell everything he knew; how he had borrowed the pencil-case of Frank, and lost it; and how, in his fear lest he should be accused of stealing the peaches, he had won from him a promise not to betray him. His reasons were given almost in the same words

which he had before used. "I knew," said he, "that no one would believe me; but I thought, I hoped that every one would believe Frank Netherton. I am sure they would if they knew him as well as I do."

Encouraged by Mr. Campbell's manner, Howard went on to tell him of all Frank's kindness to him; of his own good resolutions so often broken; and even about the talisman. "If I had consulted it as he bid me," added Howard, "all this would not have happened; but, for the last week, I have not dared to open it."

"I will venture to promise," said Mr. Campbell, "that its answer to-night will be one of peace."

"And yet," exclaimed Howard, despondingly, "I have only done what I ought to have done long since."

"The best of us," replied Mr. Campbell, "are but unprofitable servants. We shall never find peace by looking at ourselves. We must look to Christ. He is our peace. You believe this, Howard?"

"I do not know what I should do if I did not believe it, sir: only I am apt to forget it sometimes, and then I feel very miserable."

"Like Peter, the moment we take our eyes off the Saviour, we begin to sink."

That evening, Howard opened his whole heart—with all its struggles and weakness; its fears and yearnings; its faint hope, and trembling faith; its utter helplessness—to his kind preceptor. It was an era in his life, and he was wont to affirm that from that day everything went better with him. Mr. Campbell understood and helped him more than he had ever been able to do before. And we may be sure that God helped him, because he has promised to help all those who come to him in the name of Jesus Christ. And we know that all God's promises are true.

It seemed a long time to the curious and anxious group assembled in the school-room.

"Poor Howard!" exclaimed one; "I can fancy him wishing that the ground would open and swallow him up. What can Mr. Campbell be saying to him?"

"What can he be saying to Mr. Campbell? for it was he who sought the interview," observed another.

Even Mr. Barlow appeared to be interested in the result of the conference, and spoke kindly to Frank on the subject.

Every voice was hushed when Mr. Campbell entered, at length. Howard had hold of his hand: he was pale, and looked as if he had been crying, but he did not seem frightened. Mr. Campbell explained everything in a few words, expressing his entire conviction that Frank had been unjustly accused, and his sorrow for what he had suffered rather than betray his school-fellow. Howard, he said, had only now done what he ought to have done at first; but, nevertheless, he should abstain from inflicting any punishment on him, as he believed, from what he had confessed to him, that he had been sufficiently punished, and that he would be braver, and wiser, and better for the time to come.

"One thing is certain," added Mr. Camp-

bell, "that the real offender has not yet been discovered. It is probable that he never will be now. As I said once before, in an affair almost as mysterious, and in which poor Netherton was also the sufferer, let us leave him to God."

Mr. Campbell then gave the boys a half-holiday, in honour of Frank's acquittal; and having shaken hands with and congratulated him in the kindest manner, withdrew to his own study, taking Mr. Barlow with him.

CHAPTER XX.

SUNSHINE AFTER STORM.

Most of the boys were sorry now for what they had said against Frank, and a few told him so with tears in their eyes. They called to remembrance their good resolutions at the time of his illness; and how well he had acted then, and since in innumerable instances which came crowding back upon their memories—instances of moral courage, and truthfulness, and forbearance, and loving-kindness, even towards those who had sought to injure him. And now, in a changed spirit, they said, "After all, there must be something in religion." Hereafter, perhaps, by God's grace, they may be led to confess that there is *everything* in religion.

Frederick was glad that he had stood by

his cousin through good and evil report; and could look round and say to his companions, "I told you from the first that he was innocent."

Hamilton and Doyle also rejoiced with Frank, even as they had sorrowed with him. Herbert, who had been kind to him all along, requested to be numbered among his friends. Frank had a great many friends now.

Howard, to use his own language, felt as if he had wings to his feet. He jumped, he laughed, he danced; he was a different creature. "Oh, if I could always do right!" thought he. "All is so easy, so delightful, and one never need be afraid then."

Frank thanked Rushton for the way in which he had behaved during the past week. "I do not remember your saying a single unkind or mocking word," said he, "which, to confess the truth, I rather wondered at."

"Yes, it was a wonder," replied Rushton. "But you have nothing to be grateful for. I suppose I must have been thinking of something else."

"Whatever the cause was," said Frank, "I am grateful for your forbearance, and shall not easily forget it."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Rushton. "How do you know but what I may be going to reform, like our friend Howard, and one or two others whom I could name?"

"O Rushton! are you serious?"

"Did you ever know me serious for above five minutes?" asked his companion, starting up with a loud laugh that had more of bitterness than mirth in it. "Not another word, Netherton, if you would not have me forfeit the good opinion which you have so erroneously formed of me. I hate everything serious; and never could endure being preached to. Leave me alone, and I shall do very well."

"So said the half-frozen traveller," replied Frank, gently, "when he sank wearily down in the cold snow to rest. Had they taken him at his word—had they left him alone—he would have perished. But I do not want to preach, only I dislike to hear you talk in that manner."

"Now for the anecdotes again!" exclaimed Rushton, turning to the rest, and still laughing. "We have had a week's rest. Tell us a story, Netherton."

"Not at present," said Frank; "my heart is too full, and can only give thanks."

The boys now dispersed about the grounds, and began to make the most of their holiday; but not before they had given, at Howard's suggestion, three cheers for Frank Netherton. Mr. Campbell heard them as he sat in his study, and was glad; and even the hard features of the usher relaxed into a smile at the sound.

"O Frank!" exclaimed Doyle, as they walked together, "you cannot think what I felt this morning when Mr. Campbell repeated those well-remembered words, 'Let us leave him to God.' It was thus he said of me once. Whoever the guilty person may be, I can only hope that God may deal with him as mercifully as he has dealt with me since then."

"I hope so too, dear Philip," replied Frank,

affectionately. "Whoever they may be, I pity them very much."

"So do I; for they will most likely be expelled from the school if they are discovered. It must be bad enough to be suspected without cause. After all, your telling would not have hurt Howard."

"But I had promised him not to tell."

"A cowardly fellow! And yet he behaved very well at last."

"Poor Howard!" said Frank, "I cannot help liking him, notwithstanding his weakness of character. We have all our faults, only we do not see our own so plainly as we do those of others. Did you ever hear of the two wallets, Philip?"

"Not that I remember."

"Every person, it is said," continued Frank, "carries two wallets hung one before and one behind him; into the first he puts the faults of others, but slips his own into the second, by which means we never see our own failings, while those of our neighbours are continually before our eyes."

"That is true enough," said Doyle, laughing.

"If the wallets could only change places," continued Frank, "how different everything would appear! If we could only peep in and see our own faults, how we should hate ourselves, and wonder that every one did not hate us! How humble we should feel; how pitiful and forbearing towards others!"

"We should indeed," replied Doyle.

Several of the boys joining them at that moment, they began to speak of other things.

"I cannot think what is come to them all," exclaimed Rushton, peevishly, as the merry laughter of his school-fellows echoed through the play-ground; and the merriest of all was Frank Netherton's. "How happy they seem to be: what a noise they make! I wish they would not laugh so."

"Is anything the matter? asked Howard, good-naturedly, as he stopped before him, out of breath with his exertions.

"What should be the matter?"

"I do not know; but I thought you looked

ill, or ill-tempered." And he laughed again, as he would not have ventured to have done a short time since.

"My head aches," said Rushton.

"That is bad; but the heartache is worse. Be thankful you have not the heart-ache."

"Pshaw!" interrupted his companion; "what do you know about such things?"

"Nothing now," replied Howard, clapping his hands, and dancing around him. "'My heart is as light as a feather.'"

"Do stand still, can't you?"

"I beg your pardon. I forgot that you had a headache. Come and play with us, and perhaps you will forget it too."

"I am in no humour for play."

"Rushton," said Howard, with a sudden thoughtfulness, "something is the matter. Will you not tell me what it is? You used to like me, and tell me everything."

"And you used to like me before Frank Netherton came between us."

"O Rushton! he never came between us. I like you now, next to him."

"Go away," said his companion, impatiently. "Go to your favourite. I want to be alone."

Howard went away sorrowfully; but his sorrow was soon forgotten. It was a happy evening. The stars came out one by one before the boys thought of returning to the house. Frank remembered how his father had often spoken to him of the stars preaching their nightly sermon to mankind, and he asked his companions if they could guess what the text was.

"I think I know," exclaimed Howard, eagerly quoting the beginning of the nineteenth Psalm: "'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.'"

"Yes, that is right," said Frank.

"Only think of Howard's guessing!" said one of the boys. "I should not wonder but what he turns out a genius after all."

"No, I shall never be a genius," replied Howard, smiling, and colouring with pleasure. "But I do hope that I shall get on better than I have done, with God's help," added he, after a pause.

"Yes, I think you will," said Claude Hamilton, kindly. He held out his hand, and Howard took it, scarcely knowing, as he afterwards confessed, whether he stood upon his head or his heels, but inwardly determined to try and deserve the good opinion thus openly expressed.

They had plum-cake for tea, which the kind housekeeper sent up to celebrate the acquittal of her favourite; for she had always liked Frank, ever since she helped to nurse him in his long illness, and would never believe in his guilt.

The evening prayers that night were something more than usual, beyond a mere form. They were the outpourings of earnest, grateful, loving, and penitent hearts, whose secret joys and sorrows were known only to God. There is a comfort in prayer, especially when,

like Frank's, our prayers are graciously turned into praises; or when, as in Howard's case, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." We fear that many of the boys did not experience this comfort, and Rushton among the number; for he arose pale and gloomy as he had kneeled down, and went away without bidding any one good-night.

CHAPTER XXI.

RETRIBUTION.

MANY of the boys, as we have before mentioned, were sorry for the way in which they had behaved to Frank, and came and told him so with tears. One or two appeared to long to say something more, but stammered, and remained silent. "We dare not confess," argued they, among themselves, "but we may atone."

Frank was careful to seize the moment when their hearts were softened towards him, to urge upon them the importance of the religion of Christ. Some wept; all listened. The little missionary forgot the prize for which he had been working so hard. He forgot everything in his zeal for the cause of God. Claude Hamilton smiled at his enthu-

siasm, and wondered at his occasional eloquence.

"You are right, Netherton," said he, "in wishing to be a missionary; and I hope to see you one yet, if we both live."

"I hope so!" exclaimed Frank.

By and by, however, the sorrow, or repentance, or whatever the impression was, wore off. The boys returned to their sports and occupations, and Frank's hearers dwindled gradually away, until none remained but Doyle, Herbert, and Howard, and another boy named Donaldson, who seemed to think that he could never do enough for Frank, and was always following him about, to the evident annoyance of Rushton. Who can tell what good seed may have been sown in those few days?

It may be that some of our readers will feel inclined to smile at our little missionary, and say, What good can a mere school-boy like Frank Netherton ever hope to do? If there be any such, we will answer them in the words of Dr. Chalmers: "Little things,

and little people, have often brought great things to pass. The large world in which we exist is made up of little particles, as small as the sands on the sea-shore. The vast sea is composed of small drops of water. The little busy bees, how much honey they gather! Do not be discouraged because you are little. A little star shines brightly in the sky, in a dark night, and may be the means of saving many a poor sailor from shipwreck; and a little Christian may do a great deal of good, if he or she will try. There is nothing like trying."

Every Saturday the boys had a half-holiday, which was eagerly looked forward to through the week. When the weather permitted, they generally took a long country walk, under the superintendence of Mr. Barlow, who, it must be confessed, had enough to do to look after them. Sometimes Mr. Campbell himself accompanied them, and his presence was never felt as a restraint. He never played the school-master out of school, but was the kind friend and intelligent com-

panion of his pupils. Mr. Barlow had no influence over them, because he had no sympathy with them. He felt this without understanding the cause, and it made him still more harsh and unbending. He had a habit, however, of falling into what the boys called "a brown study," in which he seemed to forget them and everything else in the world. At these times they did pretty much as they pleased, buying fruit and pastry, which was contrary to the rules, and eating it under his very eyes.

"I wonder what he can be thinking about," said Frank, during one of their walks, and glancing as he spoke from his noisy companions, into the stern, thoughtful countenance of the usher.

"I wonder that he can think at all," exclaimed Doyle, who was walking along with a book in his hand, which he had closed at length in despair.

"That is right," said Frank, "do not read any more; it seems a shame this glorious day. How blue the sky is! And do look at

yonder cherry-tree, with its scarlet and yellow leaves, and the elder-berries."

"Elder wine is a nice thing," said Doyle.

"I wish I had some now!" exclaimed a boy who was swinging his arms to and fro in order to keep himself warm; for it was a chill autumn day, notwithstanding its brightness.

"I wish I had some of those delicious-looking apples!" said Rushton, directing the attention of his school-fellows to a neighbouring orchard, where a few had been suffered to remain thus late in the season, and shone out temptingly above the high wall.

"They do indeed look delicious," repeated Howard.

"I dare say they are sour," observed Claude Hamilton, turning away with a smile.

"They do not look so, at any rate."

"Nonsense," said Howard; "Hamilton was only alluding to the fable of the fox and the grapes."

"As if every dunce did not know that,"

replied Rushton. "But, at any rate, I am determined to try."

"Why, you would not steal them, surely!" said Howard, turning pale.

"Pshaw! Lord Nelson himself, when he was a schoolboy, did just the same thing. Ask Netherton, and he will tell you the story."

"But he did not do it for the sake of the apples, or pears, I believe they were," replied Frank. "He did it because the others were afraid, and at considerable personal risk, in order to show his own courage. But, as my father says, it was neither true courage nor a just action."

"Nelson was a hero," said Rushton, "and worth a dozen milksops. I will be bound, if the truth were known, half of you at the present moment are afraid to mount that high wall."

"We are more afraid of doing wrong," said Claude Hamilton, gently. "Come, Rushton, you cannot be serious."

"Indeed I am," said Rushton, shaking off his hand.

"I declare," exclaimed Howard, "it is just as bad as stealing the peaches."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Rushton, turning fiercely towards him.

"I mean to say that if you take those apples, you are just as bad as the person who stole Mr. Campbell's peaches."

Rushton gazed keenly into his flushed countenance, and was not a little astonished to receive so fearless a reply.

"Bravo! Howard!" exclaimed he, after a pause; "I did not think that you had so much spirit. You will do yet."

The tears came into Howard's eyes. "O Rushton!" said he, "do not take those apples; please do not!"

"And why not?"

"Because it is wrong."

"Nonsense; old Hickson is as rich as a Jew, and has plenty more. Besides, I have set my mind upon them."

"Let us buy some," whispered Howard, showing a bright shilling. "I saw some almost as fine as we came along."

"No, I have set my heart upon these. Will any one join me in getting them?"

There was no reply.

"Will any one catch them if I climb the wall, and throw them down?"

Several of the boys drew nearer, and began to cast longing looks towards the tree.

Little Donaldson crept forward, and said something to Rushton, in a low voice, which made him change colour and hesitate for a moment, but it was only for a moment, and then he laughed, and bid him mind his own business, and be a good boy, and he would give him one of the apples when he got them.

Donaldson stamped his feet passionately; but he drew back, and said no more.

"Leave him alone," exclaimed Doyle; "it is of no use speaking to him. Let him steal the apples, and break his neck, if he likes."

"I said that you were all afraid," observed Rushton.

"Afraid!" repeated Philip Doyle.

Hamilton laid his hand upon his arm and

drew him away. Most of the boys followed—Howard among the number: but Frank still lingered.

"Come, Rushton," said he, gently, "it is never too late to do right. I know that you do not care about the fruit, any more than Nelson did. You only do it out of bravado. You will be sorry for it to-morrow. Come, will you?"

"No," answered Rushton, "I will not. So say no more about it."

"Remember," added Frank, to the remaining boys, as he turned away; "remember that the receiver is as bad as the thief."

Their laughter rang in his ears as he hastened to overtake his companions. When he had gone a little distance, Frank could not help looking back. Rushton was almost halfway up the wall. Owing to some loose bricks, the ascent was not so difficult as it appeared. A few more steps, and he would be able to bend down the tempting and heavily laden bough, and gather what he pleased. In his eagerness he grew less careful; and one of

the bricks giving way, he fell suddenly and violently on the ground.

His sharp, uncontrollable burst of agony awakened the dreaming usher, and brought the boys crowding back. Frank was the first to reach him, for the partners of his crime had shrunk away the moment he fell, and mingled with the rest, leaving him alone.

Rushton opened his eyes, and fixed them upon the face of Frank Netherton, who was bending tenderly over him, and then closed them again with a heavy groan.

Herbert ran and fetched some water in his cap, which Frank sprinkled gently over the pale face of the suffering boy.

Again Rushton unclosed his eyes. "What! you here still?" said he, making a feeble effort to push him away. "Where are the rest; where is Howard? I wish you would not hold my hand: you make it worse: any one but you."

"Here I am," said Howard, as Frank moved away, feeling somewhat hurt by Rushton's evident aversion to his presence. "What

can I do for you? I am so sorry. Where are you hurt?"

"It is my leg," replied Rushton. "I believe I have broken it:" and he once more fainted with the pain.

Assisted by Mr. Barlow, the boys hastened to make a litter of green boughs, upon which Rushton was carefully laid, and conveyed back to the house.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

Rushton had not broken his leg, but his ankle was found to be severely sprained; and although the surgeon succeeded in alleviating the intense pain from which he was suffering, he warned Rushton that it would, in all probability, be many weeks before he would be able to move. It was not until the good doctor departed, and Mr. Campbell had himself seen that all his directions were obeyed, and Rushton seemed easier and more composed, although still suffering greatly, that he found time to inquire into the particulars of the accident.

Mr. Barlow could tell him nothing. He had no idea how it happened. He thought everything was going on right, and was walk-

ing along as quietly as possible, when Rushton's piercing cry fell on his ears, and he turned back and found him lying under the high wall by Farmer Hickson's orchard. He supposed Rushton must have tried to climb it. He did not know whether there was any fruit there, but should imagine not, as it was so late in the season.

Mr. Campbell turned to Howard, who happened to be standing near him. "Perhaps you can tell me something more of this mysterious affair?" said he.

Howard blushed and hesitated; but just then a favourite sentiment of Frank Netherton's darted into his mind: "If you cannot speak the truth, say nothing."

"Yes, sir, I could tell you," answered he, after a pause: "but I would rather not, if you please."

"Very well," said Mr. Campbell, smiling and patting him on the shoulder; "then I must not ask any questions, I suppose. Whatever poor Rushton might have been doing, or going to do, he is sufficiently punished.

Mr. Campbell said no more; but he made up his mind that very day to get a new tutor, which he succeeded in doing in the course of time, much to his own satisfaction and the comfort and improvement of his pupils.

The old housekeeper did not like having Rushton for a patient as well as she had Frank. Unaccustomed to confinement, he fretted and grumbled all day long, thereby retarding his own recovery, and tiring out those who had to wait upon him. Howard frequently went to sit with him, for he really liked Rushton, and was sorry to see him suffer. Several of the other boys paid him a brief visit now and then, more out of pity than from any affection they had for him. Rushton had no real friends. Those who were the first to laugh with him were also the first to laugh at him, and kept away from his sick-chamber as if they had forgotten his very existence.

"How is it that Frank Netherton never comes to see me?" asked Rushton one day of Howard. "He is generally so fond of

playing the good Samaritan. There is no fear of my running away now, let him preach as he will."

"Frank has not forgotten you. He always inquires about you kindly, and would have come to you long since, only he did not like; that is, he did not know whether you would like it, after what you said. But perhaps it was the pain that made you speak so crossly."

"Frank Netherton is not the boy I imagine him to be if he stays away for a cross word," said Rushton.

"Then he may come? He will be so glad; and I am glad too."

"Why?"

"Perhaps I had better not tell you."

"Nonsense; why should you not tell me?"

"You will be vexed."

"That is no new thing."

"Well, then, I am glad because I hope that he will do you good, as he did me. I do not mean that he will make the pain less, but teach you, perhaps, to bear it better. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand well enough."

"I wish you would try and like Frank Netherton," continued Howard, encouraged by Rushton's manner.

"We seldom like those whom we have injured," said Rushton, in a low voice, as if he were speaking to himself.

Howard looked surprised, but he did not reply; he did not know what to say.

"Well, go along now," continued Rushton, after a pause. "I dare say you have a thousand things to do, and it takes you as long again to do anything as it does other people. You are very kind to come to me so often. Go away, and send Netherton."

"I will ask him to come when he is able."

"Ay! you are so busy working for the prize, I suppose, while I am obliged to lie here doing nothing. But it serves me right:" and he buried his face in the clothes, and wept.

Frank laid aside what he was about, and went directly when Howard asked him. Rushton was still weeping, and did not notice his

entrance until he stood by the bedside, inquiring kindly and gently how he felt. "I am afraid you are in great pain," said he.

"Yes, I am in pain, but I do not care so much about that. I can bear my punishment. Why do you not begin to moralize, Netherton? You cannot possibly have a better subject."

"Time enough when you are well," said Frank. "I would rather pity and sympathize with you now, if you will let me."

Rushton turned away his head. "I did not send for you in order to gain your pity," said he, after a pause, "but to tell you something that has long lain heavily on my heart. Perhaps you did not think I had a heart."

"Yes I did," replied Frank, soothingly; "and a kind one, too, if you would only follow its better feelings. But you must not excite yourself."

"Very well; I will be calm. You will judge me differently when I have told you

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all. You remember the peaches which Mr. Campbell lost?"

"To be sure I do. I have reason to remember them.

"Should you like to know who stole them?"

"Yes, I should very much," exclaimed Frank, eagerly; and then checking himself all of a sudden, as his glance rested on the crimson brow of his companion, he added, "but it does not signify now; it is all past and gone."

"I stole those peaches," said Rushton.

"You?"

"Yes. It was a bright moonlight night; we crept into the garden after every one had gone to rest, and I stood under the wall and gathered them, handing them to my companions. After we had eaten them, we buried the stones in the ground. There were six of us. Of course, I do not mean to betray them, for we promised not to tell of one another; but I may inform against myself. They were all sorry for it afterwards, and wanted to confess everything, but I would

not consent. It was my fault that you suffered as long as you did."

"But the pencil-case," said Frank: "I want to know how the pencil-case came to be found where it was?"

"That is the worst part of the story; but I have made up my mind to tell you everything. I had found it on the previous day, and put it in my waistcoat pocket, intending to return it to you the first opportunity; but somehow I forgot to do so, and while I was reaching up to gather the peaches it fell out."

"I understand it all now," said Frank. "Of course, you did not notice it in the dark."

"It was a bright moonlight night, I tell you; so bright that one might have seen to pick up a pin. I did notice it."

"Then you forgot it again, I suppose, in your hurry."

"No; I went away and left it there purposely."

"O Rushton! how could you do that?"

"Because I disliked and was jealous of you. It gave me pleasure to think that the boy who was always preaching to others, and whom everybody praised, would be suspected at least of a theft which others had committed and enjoyed—although we did not enjoy it very much, for we were obliged to eat them in such a hurry. It seemed a capital joke; but I never thought, I never meant that it should end so seriously; and I wanted courage to undo what I had done. I could not rest any longer without telling you this. But I do not want—I do not expect you to forgive me."

"Rushton," said Frank, in a low voice, "if I did not forgive you with my whole heart, I could not pray to my Father to-night. I could not say, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us.' Shake hands, Rushton."

The boys shook hands in silence.

"Frank," said Rushton, after a pause, during which he had been weeping bitterly, "it is not the pain in my foot, it is your

kindness that makes me cry. You have not said a single harsh word to me."

"And I will not, if I can help it; but I have a great many words that I should like to say to you when you are stronger, and better able to hear them."

"Say them now, Frank."

"No, you must rest. I will come up again presently."

"I never came to see you when you were ill," said Rushton.

"Never mind; neither should I, perhaps, if you had not sent for me."

Frank returned to the school-room, with his mind too bewildered to attend to anything properly. Donaldson was there, and seemed to be watching for him.

"You have been to see Rnshton," said he, eagerly. "What did he want with you? Did he tell you anything?"

"What should he tell me?"

"I do not know; only I thought—I hoped—" and Donaldson paused, and looked so confused that Frank at once suspected,

what was in fact the truth, that he was one of the six who stole the peaches, and had repented of it afterwards. A sense of guilt had led him to seek forgiveness from the Saviour of sinners.

CHAPTER XXIII

BETTER THAN A PRIZE.

MANY were the hours which Frank and Rushton spent together. The latter, subdued by illness, and grateful for the undeserved kindness of his companion, grew strangely patient; and when it occasionally happened otherwise, Frank remembered how much he suffered, and bore with him as well as he could.

"I wonder," said Philip Doyle, somewhat impatiently to Frank, "how you can spend so much time with that disagreeable Rushton, especially when every moment is precious, and you ought to be working hard for a prize."

"Rushton is not disagreeable now," replied Frank. "I am really beginning to like him."

It is so natural to like those to whom we are kind.

"But the prizes," continued Doyle: "I thought that you wanted to gain one?"

"So I did; and so I do."

"You never will, if you idle away your time in the way you have been doing of late."

"I suppose not; but Rushton looks so for my coming."

"Why cannot his friend Howard sit with him?"

"Because Howard is working hard too; harder than any of us. It would do him good to get a prize."

"Yes, I hope he will," said Doyle; "he deserves it for his industry and perseverance. But I want you to gain one also."

"Thank you," answered Frank, "I should like it very much; and I think I could if I were to try."

"Then try by all means. Remember how pleased your father would be."

"And Helen," continued Frank. "Yes, I will try. I will go and tell Rushton the

reason why I cannot be with him so much, and I am sure that he will let me off."

"Let you off!" repeated Doyle. "Why, what possible claim can he have upon you?"

"The claim of sickness and misfortune," replied Frank, gently.

"You are right," said Doyle. "Now run along, and join us in the school-room as soon as you can."

Frank ran a few steps, and then hesitated; and instead of going up-stairs to visit his sick friend, went, as it was playtime, into the garden, where he walked up and down, apart from the rest, and full of thought.

"It is late, to be sure," argued he; "but I think, I have no doubt, that, by working hard, and making up for lost time, I might still gain a prize. I want to shew Helen that I can win a prize. My dear father, too, how pleased he would be! It is almost certain to be a book, and then I would leave it in his study, where he could see it every day. Rushton is not a selfish boy; and if I were to tell him this, he would be the first to urge

my staying away. But then how lonely he would be, for no one else thinks of going to see him. And perhaps he might give over reading the Bible, just as he has begun to take an interest in it. I should not be afraid if he had gone on for some time, for then he would not be able to do without it. I wish I knew what was right."

After a few more turns up and down the garden walk, Frank went on communing, as it were, with his own heart. "After all, my dear father does not care about my getting a prize. He would rather see me well and happy, and doing what was right. Neither does he need a book, or anything else to remind him of me; nor Helen either. She would not love me any better, nor so well, if she knew all. I do think I will give it up. Yes, I am determined. Whatever Doyle says, I will not desert poor Rushton, especially now that my presence seems to render him so happy; now that I am beginning to hope that God will make him a different boy for the time to come. If I am permitted to

say a single word that may be useful, it is better than gaining a thousand prizes."

Having come to this determination, Frank entered Rushton's chamber with a light heart, and his countenance so full of animation that Rushton involuntarily exclaimed, "Has anything happened? How happy you look!"

"Do I? I have been walking in the garden, and the air is so fresh and cool."

"When shall I be able to walk again? But it serves me right. I am justly punished. Mr. Campbell did well to leave me to God. How perfectly I remember those words! But are you come to stay? Will you read a little to me?"

Frank was glad that he could say yes, cheerfully.

"That is right," said Rushton, as Frank, opened his little Bible; "let it be your favourite book—your talisman! I had no idea how many beautiful stories it contained, until you pointed them out to me."

"I have heard my father," observed Frank "compare the Scriptures to a mine, in which

an abundance of precious things are always to be obtained if we will only take the trouble of digging for them. Above all, there is 'the Pearl of great price.' You know what that signifies?"

"No," answered Rushton, shaking his head.

"Well, no more should I if it had not been explained to me. Our Lord Jesus Christ is 'the Pearl of great price.' You will find it mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew."

"But what does it mean about the merchant selling all that he had, and buying it?" asked Rushton.

"I do not know exactly," replied Frank, thoughtfully. "I suppose it means, that when once he had found the Lord, he was ready to give up every thing else in the world for his sake."

Frank went on reading: "'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good

into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'"

"I cannot help understanding that," said Rushton, bitterly. "Thus it will be with me."

Frank did not know what to say, so he had recourse to his talisman: and turning to the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, read aloud to his companion the beautiful parables of the lost sheep, the piece of silver, and the prodigal son. Rushton wept as he listened. He was much struck with that sentence in the twentieth verse—"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

"I am a long way off now," thought the penitent boy; "but it may be that God sees, and will have compassion upon me."

Frank wept with him; but his heart was

full, and he could not utter a word. He could only point with his finger to the twenty-ninth verse of the first chapter of St. John —"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"—and pray in his childlike faith, that God would open the heart of Rushton to understand it, and to be comforted. He knew that nothing was impossible with God.

Both the boys were sorry when the bell rang, and Frank was obliged to go.

"You will come again soon?" said Rushton, eagerly.

"Yes, very soon." And Frank went away with that happy feeling which can only arise from the consciousness of a duty performed at some little self-sacrifice.

But we must not forget in these seasons of exultation, that even when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, and have only done that which it was our duty to do.

"I suppose you have given up all thoughts of a prize," said Philip Doyle, somewhat impatiently, as he entered.

"Yes," answered Frank, smiling; "I have given it up."

"It appears so indeed. But you are not serious?"

"I am quite serious; so do not let us say any more about it."

"I should not have expected it from you of all others," said Doyle, evidently vexed.

"Leave him alone," exclaimed Claude Hamilton, laying his hand kindly upon Frank's shoulder. "None of us will like him the less for not gaining a prize; and I for one," added he, in a low voice, "shall love him all the more."

Frank looked up with the tears in his eyes. He felt that Hamilton both understood and approved of his motives, and was grateful for his sympathy and encouragement. And so, day by day, a friendship grew between them which was only to terminate with their lives.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

Rushton was brought down-stairs for the first time the day that the prizes were distributed, and the school broke up. He still moved with pain and difficulty; and one of the boys overheard the surgeon tell Mr. Campbell, that he was afraid Rushton would feel it as long as he lived.

Philip Doyle again carried off the first prize; and he was not a little proud of his success. Howard also gained a prize, much to his own astonishment; he could not believe it possible, and actually wept for joy. Most of the boys rejoiced with him, especially Frank and Rushton.

"Who would have thought it?" exclaimed the delighted Howard, as he danced about

with his treasure. "What will my aunt and cousins say? They will never believe it. I can scarcely believe it myself."

"I always told you," said Frank, "that all you wanted was a little more perseverance."

"If it had not been for you, Frank," replied Howard, gratefully, "I should never have gained a prize, or done anything else that was right."

"O Howard! you must not say that."

"You know what I mean," said Howard. "You led me to the talisman."

Philip Doyle now approached to congratulate Howard, and shake hands with Rushton on his once more coming among them.

"Do you not feel very happy?" whispered Howard, pointing to the splendid-looking volumes which Doyle held in his hand.

"Yes, but for one thing—I am disappointed that Frank Netherton has not a prize also."

"Never think of me," said Frank; "I am happier without one."

"Happier?"

"Well, just as happy. Pray do not think of me."

Even Mr. Campbell appeared surprised that Frank had given up contending for the prize, but he said nothing on the subject. His school-fellows thought less highly of his talents than they had hitherto done; but a few, among whom was Claude Hamilton and Donaldson, loved him all the better for his kindness. Rushton seemed to have no idea of the sacrifice that had been made on his account. Notwithstanding which, he was very grateful to Frank: and parted from him, when the carriage came to convey him home, with many thanks for all that he had done: but Frank noticed that he appeared to be agitated and undecided, as if he would fain have said something more, but wanted courage.

"Poor Rushton!" exclaimed Howard, as he stood by the window and saw the servants lift him into the carriage, and place him carefully upon the cushions prepared for him.

"How altered he is!" said Herbert. "I

do not mean in appearance only; but have you not observed how gentle and good-natured he has been of late?"

"Yes," answered Howard. "He never laughs at me now; or at any one else."

"God's ways are not our ways," said Claude Hamilton. "He doeth all things well: and what seems at first to be painful and hard to bear, turns out, not unfrequently, a blessing in disguise. But here is Rushton come back again. How white he looks! What can have happened?"

"May I speak to you a moment, sir," said Rushton, as Mr. Campbell went himself to the carriage, in order to save him the pain of getting out.

"Certainly. But what is the matter, Rushton? I am afraid you are suffering a great deal."

"Not more than I deserve, sir. I could not go away without telling you—without—but I would rather, if you please—that is, I think I had better say what I have to say before my school-fellows."

Mr. Campbell forbore to express the surprise which he could not help feeling, and desired that his pupil might be carried into the school-room.

"Rushton has come back," said he, turning to the boys, who gathered round with eager curiosity, "because he has something on his mind which he will feel easier when he has confessed. Is it not so?"

"Yes, sir," replied Rushton, who was pale and trembling. Donaldson went up to him and took hold of his hand, but he did not utter a word.

"Sit down, Rushton, and take your time," said Mr. Campbell, observing how much he suffered.

"O sir!" exclaimed the penitent boy, "do not speak so kindly to me—pray do not. I do not deserve it. You have no idea how wicked I have been."

With many sobs and self-upbraidings, Rushton proceeded to confess everything; how he had stolen the peaches, and purposely left the pencil-case where it was found, in order

that Frank might be suspected. He did not attempt to excuse himself, but appeared to be deeply conscious of his own sinfulness, and anxious that no suspicion should rest upon others in consequence. When he had finished speaking, Donaldson let go his hand, and in the profound silence that intervened went up to Mr. Campbell, and said in a firm voice, "I also helped to steal your peaches, sir; and I am very sorry for it now."

There was no one present that did not honour Donaldson at that moment: yet more than one wanted courage to follow his example.

After a few moments, Mr. Campbell took Rushton into his own study, and Donaldson followed them. Howard was the first to break the silence that ensued.

"Who would have thought it?" said he, with a sigh. "Poor Rushton! how much he must have suffered!"

"I had almost said, serve him right," exclaimed Doyle; "only one cannot help pitying him now that he is so ill, and sorry for what he has done."

"I hope that Donaldson will not be punished," observed one of the boys.

"So do I," said Herbert; "and there was something in the expression of Mr. Campbell's face which makes me think that his punishment will not be very great."

"It shows that Rushton was truly penitent, or he would not have come back again," observed Howard.

Frank proposed that they should, upon their return to school, never in any way allude to the affair of the peaches before Rushton or Donaldson, to which they all readily assented.

Rushton did not return to the school-room. Frank could not help watching him as he was again lifted into the carriage. Just as it was driving away, Rushton looked up, and perceiving him, nodded and smiled as he had not smiled before for many weeks.

Donaldson also departed without bidding his school-fellows farewell. He needed not have been afraid of meeting them, for they were all prepared, as he afterwards found, to think kindly of him.

Hamilton was the next to leave. Frank and he promised to write to each other. They were real friends now. Never had Frank felt so happy; he would have liked to have made friends with the whole world. Philip Doyle could not understand it: but he was pleased to see him so well and cheerful. Frank promised that he would try and gain a prize next year for his sake.

The cousins had a pleasant journey back again to the dear home, and had also the satisfaction of finding all well when they got there. Little Helen was too delighted at seeing them to think of anything else. And Frank's bright and animated countenance pleased his father better than if he had brought home many prizes.

"I never saw a boy so altered in my life," exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer. "Why, he is half a head taller at least, and has almost as much colour as my Frederick."

Mr. Netherton did not reply. His thin hands were folded together, and his eyes meekly raised to the Giver of all good.

It was not long before Frederick told them the story of the peaches; and how well Frank had behaved in keeping Howard's secret; while Helen listened with the tears in her eyes. And then Frank added how his cousin had stood his friend throughout, in good report and evil report, and what a comfort it had been to him; upon which his mother and sister kissed Frederick fondly, while Mr. Netherton thanked him for his kindness to his dear boy. Frederick never forgot that day, or the impression it made upon him; and from that time Frank always found a firm friend and supporter in his cousin.

Claude Hamilton kept his promise of writing to Frank; and a regular correspondence commenced between them, which was continued, whenever they were separated, as long as they lived.

Mr. Netherton congratulated his son upon having found, or rather made, such a friend. But he forbore to add, that he hoped he would be a comfort to him when he himself should be no more. He could not bear to

throw a shadow over the bright future which Frank anticipated when Hamilton should be able to come and stay with them at the Grange.

Just before the holidays terminated, Frank received a letter from Rushton, in which he told him that he should not be permitted to return to school, but was going abroad with his parents. "My foot," he wrote, "is still painful; it is thought that I may feel the effects of it a long while. I hope I shall—I do not mean the pain, but the recollections which it brings with it. O Frank! I shall never forget your kindness to me, when I deserved nothing but reproaches. There are other things, too, which I hope never to forget as long as I live. I read the Bible every morning and evening, as I promised you I would. My mother has given me one just like yours. She smiled when I told her about the talisman, and said that it was a good name for it. If I had attended to its warnings before, it would have kept me from doing what I did. Remember me to Howard,

and tell him to continue to persevere. And also to Donaldson, and as many of the others as ask after or care for me, and they are few indeed. But I have deserved that it should be so."

Frank showed the letter to his father; but he did not tell even that dear parent all that he knew about, all that he had done, all that he hoped for Rushton. It was one of those innocent secrets which we are the happier for keeping locked up in our own hearts. But the language of those hearts must ever be, "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory."

"Well, Frank," said Mr. Netherton to his son, as they sat together the last day of his holidays, the boy in his old place upon the little stool at his feet; "and do you still desire as much as ever to be a missionary?"

"It is my one wish," replied Frank.

"Then be it so," said his father. "God's will be done."

"My dear papa," continued the boy, who guessed the struggle that was going on in the

heart of that affectionate parent, "I will never leave you."

"No, my child, never while I live."

"I will be a home missionary," said Frank.

"I thought that you were so anxious to visit foreign countries," added Mr. Netherton, after a pause; during which he had succeeded in controlling his almost overpowering emotion.

"Yes, I am afraid I have thought of that more than I ought," said Frank. "I half envied Rushton when I received his letter, to think that he was going abroad. But then his parents will be with him. You are not strong enough to travel, and I do not want to go anywhere without you."

"You must learn to do without me some day, Frank."

The boy answered only by pressing closer to him.

"God knows how soon," continued Mr. Netherton. "Let us try and say, His will be done."

"It is a hard lesson," replied Frank.

"We will learn it by degrees, my child."

"You are not worse, dear papa, are you?" asked Frank, looking anxiously into his pale face.

"No; I am better."

"Then why do you talk thus?"

"I know not. But you will not forget what I have said?"

"No," replied Frank, smiling through his tears, "I shall not easily forget it. I was afraid that you were ill."

Mr. Netherton sighed; but a few moments afterwards he smiled also, in order to cheer and comfort the still anxious boy. "God will comfort him," thought he, "when I am gone."

CHAPTER XXV

THE END.

It is not our intention to dwell any longer upon the school-days of Frank Netherton. Enough has been said, we trust, to excite an interest for him in the hearts of our youthful readers; and in the hearts of school-boys especially, as they will be able to enter the more readily into all its little trials and difficulties, having perhaps experienced similar ones themselves.

Towards the conclusion of the year in which it had been finally arranged that Frank should leave school, he was summoned home in great haste, where he arrived only just in time to receive his father's blessing, and hear and treasure up his last words. "Do not grieve for me overmuch," said he. "I should

like to have remained here a little longer; but to die, and be with Christ, is far better. My son, be useful, be happy. Serve God and your fellow creatures; and in a few years, through the merits of the dear Redeemer, we shall meet again in the kingdom of heaven."

A little while before he died, Mr. Netherton asked Frank if he remembered a pleasing anecdote of the good Richard Cecil; but Frank could not remember anything then. "As he was lying on his death-bed," continued his father, "he requested one of the members of his family to write down for him in a book the following sentence: 'None but Christ! None but Christ! said Lambert, dying at a stake: the same in dying circumstance, with his whole heart, saith Richard Cecil.' So also," added the expiring Christian, "saith William Netherton: None but Christ! None but Christ! He is all-sufficient."

After giving this testimony, Mr. Netherton never uttered another word, but fell asleep with his head resting upon Frank's shoulder.

For a long time Frank was inconsolable. It was only natural that he should lament for so kind a parent. Our blessed Saviour himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus. But when Frank said that he should never be happy again, his aunt rebuked him gently, very gently, and with the tears in her own eyes, and reminded him of his father's last wishes, that he should rouse himself, and endeavour to become an active and useful member of society. Then it was that Frank remembered the lesson learned so long before, and tried to say, "Not my will, O God, but thine, be done."

About this time Frank received a letter from his friend Claude Hamilton, inviting him to come and stay with him for a few weeks previous to his departure for India. "It will do you good," wrote he; "besides which, I think you will be glad to meet my 'missionary uncle,' as we used to call him, who is now here on a visit. Remember, I will take no denial."

Frank showed the letter to his aunt, who

advised him by all means to go. At his earnest request, she consented to continue to make the Grange her home.

Frank passed several happy weeks with his friend. He was quite as much pleased with the "missionary uncle" as he had expected to be; while Mr. Hamilton, on his part, took quite a fancy to Frank, and loved to draw him out, and hear him relate some of the many quaint stories and anecdotes with which his memory was stored. But what won the good old man's heart more than anything else, was his simple and earnest zeal for the cause of his divine Redeemer.

As the time drew near for Claude Hamilton's departure, the two friends became sad and thoughtful, for they loved one another very much.

One day, when Frank and Mr. Hamilton were alone, the latter said, "Claude tells me that you would like to be a missionary; is it so?"

"Yes," answered Frank, "I should like it above every thing else in the world."

"And your friends?"

"My best friend, my dear father, approved of and encouraged the wish. We used often to talk it over together."

"Do you think yourself qualified for a missionary?"

"I am young," answered Frank, modestly; "but there is nothing I would not do and bear, with God's help, in his glorious cause. Had you asked me if I thought myself worthy of such an honour, I must have answered in the negative."

"We none of us are," replied Mr. Hamilton: "but God has promised to accept our imperfect services for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour. Years hence, when your education is finished, if you still continue in the same mind, I shall be happy to assist, as far as lies in my power, in furthering your wishes. But remember, my dear Frank, we are all too apt to forget that there are home-duties as well as home missionaries."

"So my father used to tell me," said

Frank. "Yes, I will try to remember; I will try to do what is right, indeed I will."

"I believe it, my dear boy," replied Mr. Hamilton; "and can only pray that you may be led to clearly perceive, and resolutely follow, the path of duty and providence."

A few weeks after this conversation, Claude Hamilton and his uncle quitted England. The hope that they might hereafter meet again in India, dim and undefined as it was, somewhat lessened Frank's grief at parting with his friend; but the great source of consolation was the firm conviction in both their minds, that God ordereth every thing for the best, and that he was leading them—as he leads all who trust in him as they did—forth by the right way to "a city of habitation."

Our readers will be glad to hear that Howard continued to persevere; and what was better still, he continued to consult his talisman upon all occasions, and so grew up to be an active and useful member of society, and a faithful and humble follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God grant that this little history may not have been written in vain. And it will not, if, by his blessing, it should be the humble instrument of drawing one youthful heart near to himself. We would fain set forth in it the beauty as well as the comfort of the religion of Christ, showing how it supports, and cheers, and can alone make us happy. We would also encourage the very humblest of our readers to try and do something for God; and to remember that there are school, and home, as well as foreign missionaries. Frank Netherton was only a little school-boy, and yet he did a great deal of good. We may all do something, if we try. As Dr. Chalmers says, "There is nothing like trying" —only we must not forget our TALISMAN.

THE END.

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